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SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS:
A NAMIBIAN CASE STUDY

BY

ALISON MARIE HARRIS ©

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

IN

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS: A NAMIBIAN CASE STUDY submitted by ALISON MARIE HARRIS in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in International/Intercultural Education.

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Date: December 11, 1997

To my family

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate and describe the nature of the relationships that exist between one Namibian case study school and its surrounding community. This goal is based on a premise that underlies community education literature: Collaboration between a school and its surrounding community contributes to educational quality and relevance.

Prior to European contact in Namibia, the community was the direct and primary educational agent; training young people was a responsibility shared within the community. With the introduction of European schooling in the early 1800s, the educational role of the community declined as 'trained professionals' assumed positions of educational authority. Currently, the Namibian Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC) aims to elicit broad-based participation from educational stakeholders, and the community is seen as a crucial participating player. The findings indicate that collaboration between educational stakeholders is a key to creating and accomplishing worthwhile national educational objectives.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BETD: Basic Education Teaching Diploma

CIDA: Canadian International Development Agency

ICP: International Combined Primary School

MBEC: Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, Namibia

NIED: National Institute for Educational Development

OCE: Ongwediva College of Education

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PHC: Primary Health Care

SBS: School-Based Studies

SWAPO: South West Africa People's Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Namibia is an 824,290-square-kilometre country of southern Africa with a population of approximately 1.7 million (See map 1 in Appendix A). It is bordered by Angola in the north, Botswana and Zimbabwe in the east, South Africa in south, and the Atlantic Ocean in the west. There are 11 major ethnic groups represented in Namibia, and each ethnic group is made up of a number of diverse tribes.

Formerly a German colony and under the mandate of South Africa since 1915, Namibian resistance to South African rule led to the emergence of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) formed in 1960. SWAPO successfully carried out a liberation movement, and Namibia gained political independence from South Africa in 1990.

The Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC) is currently focusing on four key educational goals: equality, access, quality, and efficiency. Such goals are immensely challenging in light of the fact that in 1990 the MBEC inherited a discriminatory education system steeped in apartheid ideology. The government views community-school linkages as one key to the realisation of its educational goals. Its commitment to community participation in formal schooling is revealed in policies to include parents on all school boards, to encourage the community's involvement in school rules and finances, and to solicit the community's support to help construct and maintain school buildings.

The literature review that follows this introduction provides a rationale for 'community education.' In short, community education literature from First World and Third World Nations supports an underlying assumption of the case study: Genuine and meaningful community participation in schooling has the potential to increase educational relevance, quality, and access.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is to collaborate with educators and community members in Namibia's Oshana District, Namibia, in order to investigate and describe the relationships that exist between one school and the surrounding community. The ultimate intent of the study is to describe school-community linkages with a view to strengthening them.

Statement of the Problem

Community members are often denied meaningful participation in schools for a number of reasons. In some cases the elitism of 'experts' who have higher educational qualifications blocks the underprivileged from entering the formal education arena. The structure of formal education has the tendency to place trained educational professionals in authoritative positions; community members who are not trained in the field of education may be excluded from the school environment and educational decisions.

The question that this research proposal poses is: "What is the nature of the relationships between schools and communities in the Oshana district, Namibia?" In order to address this query, the research focuses on a case study of Komesho School and its surrounding community in northern Namibia. Additional schools were informally observed in order to gain a broader perspective of schooling in the region.

Secondary questions arise from the focus question of the thesis: How has the community historically participated in education? Are community members currently encouraged to participate in educational decisions? What national educational policies exist to support community-school relations, and are such policies being implemented? Why is it that while many community members hold valuable skills and knowledge, their involvement in schools is often not realised?

The Namibian Ministry of Basic Education (1993) states that meaningful connections between schools and their communities potentially increase the quality of education. In light of the Ministry's position, this study is an extension of Namibia's educational goals that are currently in motion. This study also continues the links that the University of Alberta holds with Namibian educators.

Delimitations and Limitations

The research is delimited to a single case study of one primary school and its relation to the surrounding community. Among the limitations that result from this delimitation is the difficulty in generalising to other schools and communities. However, general patterns of participation that are described in the study may occur in other settings.

The research is delimited to a selected number of participants from the Oshana District, Northern Namibia. Also, the study was delimited to a time frame of four months. A lack of comprehensive historical and cultural understanding is a noteworthy limitation of the study. Moreover, the researcher's cultural insight was limited by a lack of understanding the Oshykwanyama language.

CHAPTER TWO
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Critical Theory

Critical theory originated with the Frankfurt School in 1923 and developed as a synthesis of social science and philosophy that aimed to investigate current social and political problems (Kellner, 1990). Under Horkheimer's directorship, critical theory became a supradisciplinary research to investigate current social and political problems. Moreover, it was a project to unite philosophers, sociologists, economists, historians, and psychologists in ongoing research (Horkheimer in Kellner, 1990).

The theoretical framework that structures this research is based on key themes that are addressed in critical theory. One theme is the *construction of knowledge*—the understanding that knowledge is created and ambiguities exist within "common-sense" knowledge. A second theme is *hegemony*—Gramsci's notion that the domination of one group or individual over another occurs through degrees of human consent and control. It is such power relations that distort understanding and produce what is commonly accepted as 'truth' (McLaren, 1989). Third, critical theorists have been concerned with the issue of *dominant and subordinate classes,* challenging the legitimacy of social stratification. Thus, critical theory aims to explain social systems in order to become a catalyst that leads to the transformation of social order towards a more egalitarian and just society (Fay, 1987). Critical pedagogy aims to enhance human freedom and possibilities, and in that sense it is emancipatory. Fourth, critical theorists have been concerned with the issue of social, economic, and gender *inequalities* that increase when the elite members of society control education and others are not given the opportunity to participate in formal education (Toh, 1987). Finally, this paper adheres to the critical perspective that all pedagogy contains a *political element* because nations, communities, and teachers are not free of values and motives (Freire, 1970).

In sum, critical theorists are concerned with domination—the ways in which socioeconomic and political systems force, manipulate, or blind people into ensuring their reproduction and continuation (Craib, 1986). Critical ideology shows how society can be irrational or oppressive in that it takes away human ability to transform our own environment and to make collective, rational choices about our lives. Critical theory seeks to place present society and views into a historical context, showing that they are not fixed but are part of a changing process (Craib, 1984, p. 189). It recognises that cultures are unique for a given time and place. Critical theory sees the individual as a social actor who is impacted by society and at the same time has the potential to impact society. It is dialectical in nature because it sees both the individual and society as "inextricably woven" (McLaren, 1989).

Literature Review

The meaning of community education alters according to individual situations; therefore, community educators argue that it has been difficult to create a coherent theory of community education. Maurice Seay et al. (1974; as cited in Alladin, 1985) in their book *Community Education: A Developing Concept* note the absence of theory development in the field of community education. The following literature review draws from international research in community education that is highly diverse in its content and conclusions. Through the process of examining a broad range of community education literature, the researcher has reached specific definitions of *community* and *community education.* Hence, following the literature review, this chapter also defines the researcher's concepts of these terms.

Conceptions of Community

Community can refer to a social unit, consisting of people who live more or less in proximity to one another and are engaged in social processes and relationships (Olsen; as cited in Minzey & LeTarte, 1972, p. 21). Elsewhere, community has been defined as "a wide grouping of people located within fairly recognisable boundaries and related to each other by social, economic and civic activities which produce a cohesiveness sufficient to develop a history and a recognisable identity" (OECD, 1975, p. 12).

Central to definitions of community is the notion of shared values and ideals. Yet, critics have argued that literature on community education has contributed to an exaggerated concept of shared values in a community. When communities are depicted as homogeneous entities, a distorted picture of social reality emerges (Taylor, 1984, p. 37). All communities contain diversity; differences within a given community must be recognised and respected. The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1975) points out that it is necessary to understand the uniqueness of a particular community in any given situation and to structure participation accordingly.

Clark (1987; as cited in Allen, 1987, p. 53) stresses that there are several ways of thinking about the concept of community: as a human collective; as the people of a district; as a territory, (for example, a rural village); as shared activities; as close-knit relationships; as solidarity; and as present reality. Clark also argues that education cannot exist apart from community; the two must be interconnected and dependent on each other.

For this Namibian case study, the term community is based on the 'African' concept of shared educational roles and responsibilities. The researcher's concept of community also includes the paradox that individuals in any given communities are diverse and unique yet may share central values and activities. Moreover, the term community implies a defined geographical domain or district where a group of people live with some degree of interconnectivity.

Diverse Understandings of Community Education

Minzey and LeTarte (1979, p. 6) outline five fundamental principles of community education:

1. School-community interaction is crucial.
2. The total community is the educational agency.
3. Schools have a broader role than educating only the youth of the community.
4. Education must relate to the problems and needs of the community being served.
5. Education must relate to smaller communities or community subgroups for maximum effectiveness.

Minzey and LeTarte (1972) provide a concise definition of community education:

> a philosophical concept which serves the entire community by providing for all of the educational needs of all its community members. It uses the local school to serve as the catalyst for bringing community resources to bear on community problems in an effort to develop a positive sense of community, improve community living, and develop the community process toward the end of self-actualization. (p. 27)

Kerensky (1981) states that community education is a philosophy that envisions community involvement in decision-making processes; maximum utilisation of community resources; a sense of belonging; and broad citizen-based evaluation procedures. Moreover, community education attempts to mobilise all human and physical resources of a community toward the improvement of individual and community life (Kerensky, 1981). Fantini (1978) adds that community education is a philosophy of education deeply rooted in the values of human potential (p. 6).

Whereas such an ideological basis is positive and optimistic, it may be overly so. Is it possible for one educational concept to solve a vast number of community and national challenges? Can deeply rooted social and educational inequalities that exist within national and international contexts find solutions in local settings? Critical theory illuminates and challenges the extent to which a community can be held responsible for educational and socioeconomic issues that exist within national goals and priorities. In a discussion on community education in the Third World, Lillis points out that educational innovations such as participatory community education run the risk of being viewed as illegitimate extensions of the process of academic schooling (1985).

A critical perspective of community education highlights that without broadly-based participation, a minority of 'professionals' who hold a greater degree of power and control have increased socioeconomic mobility. Societies have the tendency to generate sectional interests (Craib, 1984) and in the absence of participatory democracy, education systems will continue to perpetuate socioeconomic inequalities. A more relevant education system emerges when the community, including 'non-professional' educators are included and encouraged to participate in educational decisions and processes. In light of structural constraints that exist beyond the community, why is the local school the primary institution in the concept of community education?

The School as a Vehicle for Achieving Community Education

Over the past several decades, community educators have argued that schools have an entry into communities through children and are able to link and establish relationships between various community services. For example, Dewey (1899; as cited in Alladin, 1985, p. 3) stresses the social responsibility of the school to educate the child to become an integrated member of his community. He argues that the school should affiliate itself with the activities of the community and the school should be a microcosm of community.

OECD (1975, p. 49) points out in their second volume of *School and Community* that there is no one model for school-community interaction and little consensus about what the interrelationships should or could be. Models have tended to be time and space specific and dependent to a very large degree on the particular persons involved. The OECD study of school and community addresses a problem of modern society, its tendency to fragment and split up human activity; and it focuses on "integrative efforts to overcome this" (1975, p. 48). It is argued that there is a need to broaden the role of the school in order to deepen its "social integration" into communities

Community educators argue that schools should open their doors to encourage the flow of people; ideally, community members step into schools and students frequently visit the community. Kerensky (1981), in a discussion of the *Inadequacy of Schoolhouse Education,* points out that parents and citizens have lost their historic role in relation to public schools.

He believes that community education has the potential to allow citizens to re-enter the school arena. According to Rennie (as cited in Poster, 1990, p. 10), the modern community school embraces the concepts of linking education with industry and commerce, vocational training, enterprise, and cost-effective use of resources.

Clark (as cited in Allen, 1987, p. 123) states that in an effective community school, the role of the professional teacher becomes that of a well-informed guide, and the classroom serves as a base camp rather than an all-purpose learning enclosure. The issue of the school's isolation from society continues to disturb critical educators.

> Many schools are like little islands set apart from the mainland of life by a deep moat of convention and tradition. Across this moat there is a drawbridge which is lowered at certain periods during the day in order that the part-time inhabitants may cross over to the island in the morning and back to the mainland at night. Why do these young people go out to the island? They go there in order to learn how to live on the mainland. When they reach the island they are provided with a supply of excellent books that tell about life on the mainland. They read these books diligently, even memorising parts of them. Then they take examinations. (Carr, 1942; as cited in Poster, 1990, p. 35)

The conviction that strengthened community-school relations can benefit stakeholders and the realisation that schools will be in place for some time motivates educators to continue focusing on the school as the institution that will best deliver community education.

Participation

One of the more consistent themes in community education is agreement on the value of participation. But the question "When is participation genuine?" has been answered in a myriad of ways. For example, how is a community participating in a meaningful way if it has little say in the agenda for educational change? It has been argued that participation cannot be conceived, driven and directed by a minority of elite professionals (Wangoola; as cited in Poster, 1992, p. 196). Wangoola, in a discussion on popular participation notes that participation has always existed in the history of African "development." Regrettably, participation was not to the Africans benefit but to the merchants, colonialist, monarchs, and farm owners (Wangoola in Poster, 1992). There is the danger that participation will amount to incorporation, where those without power have no leverage and those with power place a cloak of respectability, acceptability and legitimacy to their agenda (Poster, 1992).

Kaplan and Tune (1978) point out varying levels of citizen participation in public education. At the first level, citizens serve in a *supportive* role. Their support as aides, helpers, or classroom resource persons rarely involves making decisions or influencing policy changes. At the next level, citizens are involved in an *advisory* capacity. Community members have the opportunity to voice their ideas and concerns, but they do not make final decisions. The subsequent three stages of participation include citizens in decision-making processes in increasing degrees: *citizen sharing in certain decisions; citizen sharing in all decisions;* and *citizen control.* At all levels, successful citizen participation does not occur by chance; it must be wisely planned and implemented (Kaplan and Tune, 1978). The researcher sees immense value in the latter stage where community members share in all educational decisions. and participation moves beyond mere 'tokenism' or serving a minority of elite as an instrument of coercion.

One foundational principle of community education is that communities are made up of people who are experienced and skilled (regardless of their levels of formal education) and are able to add to the learning climate of schools. Kerensky (1981) aptly explains:

> In every community there are many people who are well-educated and wise but who have little or no schooling. There are also those who are very schooled and who hold certificates to prove it—yet are not educated or wise. (p. 11)

This observation is particularly relevant to rural communities in northern Namibia, where people possess invaluable skills and understandings that have been acquired through experiences outside of the formal education system. Critical educators are challenging the perception that knowledge gained through formal education settings is more legitimate than knowledge acquired outside of the formal school setting (Kerensky,1981; Lillis,1985; Ishumi, 1981).

Skilled trades people are a resource that teachers and schools often fail to acknowledge; they are often willing to assist in teaching endeavours (Wilson, 1980, p. 123). Members of any given community have unique skills and knowledge that correspond to school curricula. For example, schools can invite masons, artists, historians, writers, and athletes to shape the school's curriculum. New educational roles thereby emerge when community members participate in a "paraprofessional" capacity. Clark (as cited in Allen, 1987, p. 123) states that community education requires that all become teachers as well as learners.

Community members and resources may be available to fill the gaps that exist in a trained educator's field of knowledge. When national leaders and educators give significant consideration to the skills and knowledge that exist in their community, teachers' roles become that of facilitators or resource persons. OECD (1975) reinforces this idea: An important effect of increased participation is a change in the role of the teacher.

Parental Involvement in Formal Education

In *The Evidence Grows,* an annotated bibliography that describes 35 studies on the subject of parental participation in the United States, a summary of the findings is that "parental involvement in almost any form appears to produce measurable gains in student achievement" (Henderson, 1988). Overall, results include positive attitudes, increased academic achievement, and more effective schools.

Henderson (1988, p. 150) also states that the particular forms of parental involvement do not seem to be as important as the fact that the involvement is reasonably well-planned, comprehensive, and lasting. Yet, the following question should not be ignored: What is the value of token participation if it denies parents genuine input in educational decisions? Although educators will likely continue to disagree about the specific roles that parents should take in schools, most educators agree that parental involvement in formal education is a key factor for their children's 'success' in school. Without losing sight of the external social forces that impede a child's chances of succeeding in school, it can be argued that parental involvement is a powerful force in the learner's formal education experiences. Henderson states that the degree of parental interest in the quality of education is the critical factor in explaining higher levels of achievement and higher educational aspirations. Moreover, the average level of achievement rises when parents are involved *in* the school rather than being involved only at home (p. 151).

Community Education: Perspectives from the Third World

In order to provide schooling that is relevant to Third World rural areas, parents must have an audible voice in school-related decision-making processes. Martin Carnoy (1982, p. 163) reports that in almost every study of education in the Third World, the children of rural parents average very low levels of schooling, much lower than urban children. And despite the increase in urban migration, a majority of Third World children continue to come from rural areas.

Ishumi (1981), in reference to community education in the Third World, states that its primary purpose is to create "conditions for the members of a community to gain control over their own environment through habits of co-operation, responsibility, creativity, and initiative" (p. 74). In the Third World, educational experiments and innovations are born out of the necessity to reform an inadequate formal education system. Research has been conducted on the outcomes of Relevant Education Programmes which have been initiated in rural areas (Sinclair & Lillis, 1980). Analysing six case studies of relevant community schooling (in Mexico, Turkey, India, Philippines, Tanzania, and Upper Volta) Sinclair and Lillis identify several objectives of such programmes:

1. Giving students the knowledge and skills that will lead to increased productivity, improvements in health, and the ability to participate in village-level organisations;

2. Influencing pupils attitudes in order to create a greater acceptance and positive motivation toward rural life;

3. Developing character qualities that will be conducive to social stability and work productivity such as perseverance, self-reliance, cooperation, and loyalties to the country's political ideologies;

4. Lowering the cost of schooling through agricultural production and the sale of pupils' craft products; and

5. Improving the effectiveness of the general education programme using productive activities as learning aids and increasing local relevance (p. 81).

Such ambitious objectives reflect the immense challenges that formal education structures have faced in the rural Third World. Difficulties include low and undervalued agricultural production, poor health care, a low percentage of GNP spent on education, urban migration, and the alienation between schooling and traditional rural life. Given the difficulties that rural societies face, educators must question the assumption that community schooling alone will impact rural problems.

It is no longer reasonable to place the responsibility for community change solely in the hands of the community when national and international external forces are acknowledged. Education systems are embedded in socioeconomic ideologies which may not be conducive to community education reforms. For example, educators and policy makers are reluctant to encourage community participation when citizens are not formally educated for fear of deformalising schooling. Moreover, following the inception of Western models of schooling in Third World Nations, increasingly higher levels of academic education have been rewarded. Finally, many educational reforms in rural areas are "based upon untenable premises and promise ideologies that rarely stand up to socio-economic realities" (Lillis, 1985, p. 14).

In an analysis of several studies on the school and the community in "less developed areas," Lillis (1985, p. 15) concludes that in addition to socioeconomic and political barriers, there are specific educational constraints to educational reforms: (a) Teachers may not be supportive of proposed change; (b) academic models persist in Third World countries, and alternate models are immediately considered inferior; (c) community education proposals may be lacking an appropriate theoretical basis; and (d) resources may be inappropriately utilised.

In Ishumi's (1981) discussion of the philosophy of the community school in the Third World, he cites from *A Community School in a Spanish-Speaking Village,* in which Watson and Tireman describe general principles of a community school:

> 1. We shall try to find out what is most needed in the lives of the people of the community;
>
> 2. We shall constantly try to discover and utilise the resources of the community;
>
> 3. The starting point in every part of the curriculum will be (our local community).
>
> 4. The curriculum will be kept flexible to meet the interest and the ability of the various groups. (p. 154)

Critical educators such as Carnoy (1982) argue that reform and struggle can and should occur within educational systems. Strengthening the relationships between schools and their communities and increasing the level of community participation in schooling are measures to combat exploitation and steps towards educational equality and relevance.

The Namibian Case Study: Concepts of Community Education

The Namibian Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC; 1993), in its document *Education for All* outlines its goals for community-school collaboration.

> The MBEC relies on the active participation and cooperation of many others—individuals and organisations, public and private, national and international—to develop and support a sound education system. Just as all of us benefit when that system works well, so each of us has a role to play in ensuring that is does work well.
>
> We must work diligently and consistently to facilitate broad participation in making the major decisions about our education and how we implement them. In schools that are responsive to their communities, parents and neighbours are not regarded as generally unwelcome outsiders. Instead, the schools are organised to enable them to be active participants in school governance, active contributors to discussions of school management and administration, and active evaluators of the quality of instruction and learning.
>
> Our commitment to education for all insists that we all—learners, educators, the community at large—share responsibility for enabling learners to be successful. (p. 7)

These excerpts reflect the MBEC's conception of 'community education,' a position that is analysed later in this study. The research data in the following chapters illuminate the extent to which the MBEC's goals for school-community relationships are achieved in one case study school and its community.

The researcher's goal—to describe the relationships that exist between one school and its surrounding community—was guided by the researcher's concept of *community education.* In this Namibian case study, community education is a concept that envisions broad educational participation and collaboration from parents, additional community members and educational stakeholders, professional educators, and accessible resources.

Whereas the community was the primary educational agent in indigenous African education, the modern concept of schooling has the tendency to elevate the position of trained educators. The researcher aligns with critical educators who argue that a challenge for current African educational planners is one of reconciliation and synthesis (Ocitti, 1973, p. 109). That is, community education must critically examine indigenous education as well as the imposed 'European' schooling system in order to decide what should be rejected, modified or preserved, and accepted.

The researcher's definition of community education was informed by tracing the historical path of community education in Namibia. Indigenous education viewed the community as the primary educational agent. Prior to independence, during South Africa's discriminatory Bantu education era, community education became an enforced policy and a tool of apartheid in the hands of a privileged White minority. Following independence, the MBEC has sought to encourage a form of community education in which the community will have limited forms of participation in formal education and support Namibia's educational ideologies and goals. The researcher argues that the political nature of community education cannot be undermined; community education must include genuine community participation at all decision-making levels in order to rise above tokenism and coercion.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

The methodology for this research can be described as a qualitative case study that employs ethnographic methods to collect data. This chapter discusses case study methodology, followed by a description of ethnographic research methods. Additionally, Chapter Three provides a rationale for choosing Komesho School as the case study school. Finally, the ethical considerations for this research are addressed.

Case Study Methodology

Case study is a nonexperimental or descriptive research design that can be used to study a phenomenon systematically. The case study looks for connections among observable actions and behaviour (Smith; as cited in Jaeger, 1988, p. 255). Moreover, the case study seeks holistic explanation and "interpretation in context" (Merriam, 1988, p. 7). Merriam describes case studies as *particularistic*—case studies focus on a particular situation, event, programme or phenomenon; *descriptive*—the end product of the study is a rich or "thick" description of the phenomenon under study; and *inductive*—generalisations, concepts, or hypotheses emerge from an examination of data.

Case study aims to reach the "best possible, the most compelling interpretation" (Bromley; as cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 30). In short, it aims to arrive at an accurate but limited understanding of the phenomena under study (Stake, 1995, p. 134).

Case study methodology does not claim any particular methods for data collection or analysis (Merriam, 1988, p. 10), but it organises social data "so as to preserve the unitary character of the social object being studied" (Goode & Hatt; as cited in Jaeger, 1988, p. 256).

Interviewing, observing, and analysing texts are the ethnographic methods that provide clues about the *culture* of the school that is studied. Culture in this context is defined as "a system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting" (Goodenough; as cited in Spindler, 1982, p. 139). Gathering many types of data using a variety of methods increases the validity and reliability of the study. Moreover, the uniqueness of each setting and each area of study requires a "tailor-made set of methods and techniques" (Wilcox; as cited in Spindler, 1982, p. 460).

Ethnographic Methods

Interviewing

According to Spradley (1979), ethnographic interviews can be thought of as "a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants" (p. 58). He describes the three most important ethnographic elements as its *explicit purpose*—the informant has a dim idea about this purpose, and the ethnographer must make it clear; *ethnographic explanations*—the ethnographer offers repeated explanations to the informant, who is learning to become a teacher; and *ethnographic questions*—the ethnographer poses descriptive, structural, and contrast questions in order to draw out the desired information. Asking varying forms of ethnographic questions is an integral part of the ethnographic interview.

Ethnographic interviews are designed with a specific research question in mind, and a variety of additional questions should be considered prior to the interview. However, "design takes shape gradually, as the researcher listens and hears the meaning with the data" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 43).

According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), interviews provide the opportunity for unexpected dialogue; the interview process must be *flexible* and adaptable to the direction of the conversation. Also, interviews must be *iterative:* "Each time you repeat the basic process of gathering information, analyzing it, winnowing it, and testing it, you come closer to a clear and convincing model of the phenomenon you are studying" (p. 46). In the final stages, there is an emphasis on analysing and testing the themes that have been identified; the researcher forms theories based on the data. Theories must be validated by returning to interviewees and participants as well as critical readers in the field (Rubin & Rubin, p. 47). The *continuous* nature of interviewing means that the questioning is redesigned throughout the project; new topics can be explored while keeping the research organised and focused. The researcher must ensure that the core topics have been pursued in sufficient depth to be able to reach conclusions based on collected data.

Key questions that the interviews of this study investigated include: How do participants relate to the people and resources that surround them? To what degree are parents/guardians involved in their children's education? What is the relationship between learning taking place in school and learning occurring outside of school? Does the school and its surrounding community work together to 'educate' children? In what ways are community members encouraged to participate actively in Komesho school's decision-making processes?

Observation

The ethnographic tool of observation attempts to capture, in detail, the conduct of life in a particular setting (Wilcox; as cited in Spindler, 1982, p. 460). Bryman (1988) provides a useful description of key characteristics of observational research, which can be summarised as follows:

1. Seeing from the perspective of the people being studied;

2. Describing details in order to understand what is going on in a particular context;

3. Contextualising the environment—situating observed events within the wider and historical context;

4. Processing—viewing social life as involving interlocking series of events;

5. Designing a flexible research philosophy that is wary of imposing inappropriate frames of reference on people;

6. Avoiding a static conceptual basis—rejecting premature attempts to impose theories and concepts that may not fit the participants' perspectives (Bryman; as cited in Silverman, 1993, p. 31).

The researcher must *test the hypotheses* that have been generated in the field. In order to validate observational research, observations must be extensive, and patterns must be repeated and reoccurring. Hammersley (1992; as cited in Silverman, 1993) notes that "reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions" (p. 145).

Ethnographic observation involves varying degrees of participation and interaction. For example, a low level of participation has been described by Spradley (1980) as *passive participation.* In this situation, the observer is a bystander or spectator of the action that surrounds her/him. In the next level, *moderate participation,* the observer minimally participates and attempts to maintain a balance between being an outsider and an insider. In contrast, the *active participant* seeks to do what other people are doing to "more fully learn the cultural rules for behaviour" (p. 60).

The researcher employed varying degrees of participation according to the nature of specific situations. For example, the researcher took the role of a passive participator when observing primary health care nurses at Komesho School because further participation would not have been appropriate. During the four-month study, the researcher was to some extent immersed in the school's environment as a moderate or active participant. For example, the researcher interacted with students and teachers, assisted in teaching English classes, and attended school assemblies and staff meetings. Due to language barriers, the researcher was not immersed in the community surrounding Komesho School.

Analysis of Texts, Records, and Documents

When a researcher seeks to understand the relationship between a setting and its context, a wide range of materials may prove to be valuable. Specifically in the study of schooling, Kathleen Wilcox (as cited in Spindler, 1983, p. 461) notes that researchers may utilise many forms of data: school documents, cumulative school records, textbooks, and other curriculum materials. Silverman (1993, p. 60) also points out that ethnographic methods include analysing the ways in which documents, tables, and so on provide insights on the research setting.

Documents raise questions that are valuable sources of information for the researcher. Questions include: How are documents written? For what purposes are they read? What is omitted in documents? What is recorded? What is taken for granted? What must the readers know in order to make sense of the documents? (Silverman, 1993, p. 60). For this case study, the analysis of written texts provided the researcher with an understanding of Namibian educational policies on the community's role in formal education and the Ministry's goals for school-community relations.

The ethnographic interview, ethnographic observation, and analysing texts are three tools that qualitative researchers can employ to gain an understanding of a selected 'culture.' Ethnographic research techniques are natural yet purposeful techniques that allow the researcher to develop insights into diverse world views.

For the Komesho School case study, the researcher analysed relevant documents and texts from a variety of sources. Analysed MBEC documents include its policy statement entitled *Education in transition: Nuturing our future: A policy guideline statement* (1990); *How much do Namibian children learn in school?* (1994); *Namibian code of conduct for schools* (1990); and *Toward Education for All: A development brief for education, culture, and training* (1993). Additionally, the researcher analysed pamphlets that were published by the MBEC and available to be sent home to parents/guardians to communicate issues such as discipline and basic health. Policy documents for the Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD) programme were analysed to determine its goals and processes to reach its goals. BETD documents included: *National evaluation of the Basic Education Teacher Diploma: Broad curriculum issues* (1995) and *School Based Studies: Ongwediva College of Education* (1996). Articles within a Namibian Journal of Education, *Reform Forum* were analysed as were articles within the Namibian Teacher's Union Journal. Finally, the school board minutes from Komesho School were translated into English and analysed by the researcher in order to understand issues that were discussed and decided by the school board.

Rationale for Selecting Komesho School and Participants

Komesho School was selected as the case study school on the basis of preliminary research. The majority of primary schools in northern Namibia are rural, and the purpose of the study is to describe the school-community relationships in a 'typical' rural school. Komesho School is located 11 kilometres from Oshakati town, although the vast majority of learners come from rural villages. However, the community's proximity to Oshakati town, the largest semi-urban centre in northern Namibia, results in unique dynamics that are subsequently described.

Despite this community's 'urban' proximity, participants verified that Komesho School, located in the Oshana district (see map #2 in Appendix A), serves primarily a subsistence farming population and to a certain degree exemplifies a typical northern Namibian school. For example, like most northern schools, Komesho School lacks 'modern' resources such as a school phone, photocopier, sports equipment, and print materials that are found in more advantaged schools in a city such as Windhoek. Moreover, class sizes are above the national average in Komesho School and are 'typical' for the Oshana district. The average class size for the Oshana district is 43.5, whereas the national average is 35.0 (MBEC, 1994). However, within the Oshana region, Komesho School is above average in terms of basic amenities. In its Oshana regional district, only 10% of schools receive electricity, and 70% have a water supply, yet Komesho School has both amenities (MBEC 1996).

Diverse, yet 'representative' participants were chosen in order to gain the broad perspective of the relationships that exist between Komesho School and its surrounding community. Five parents/guardians from a variety of backgrounds were formally interviewed. Parents/guardians were chosen by Komesho teachers and parents/guardians signed a consent form before the researcher visited these families. A concise description of each parent/guardian follows.

Codes	Relation to child(ren)	Primary occupations
P1	Mother (likely biological)	Subsistence agriculture
P2	Father (likely biological)	Migrant labour, farming
P3	Grandmother (maternal)	Farming, caregiver
P4	Mother (likely biological)	Human rights worker
P5	Maternal grandparents	Farming, caregivers

In order to broaden the perspective of the data, community members who were not parents/guardians of Komesho children were also asked to participate in formal and informal interviews. Community members (codes C1-C6) include primary health care nurses, one leader of the elder's council, two teacher educators from Ongwediva College of Education, and one member of the Ongwediva Teachers' Resource Centre. Six Komesho teachers (codes T1-T6) responsible for Grades 1 through 5 were formally interviewed. Additional teachers participated in the study through informal interviews and observations.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were addressed in the early stages of the research and throughout the study. At the University of Alberta, permission for the study was granted by an ethics review committee. In December, the Namibian Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC) granted research permission to study community-school relations (Appendix B). In January, the Namibian Ministry of Home Affairs granted the necessary study visa.

At Komesho School, the researcher described the purpose of the research to the principal and staff and submitted a written research proposal (Appendix C), which was subsequently accepted by the school. The researcher met with the district inspector and submitted a research proposal.

Prior to interviews and observations, the researcher described the nature and purpose of the study. The participants read and signed an interview/observation consent form (Appendix D). Participants with limited English comprehension read and signed a consent form that was translated in the Oshykwanyama language. Interviews were conducted with or without a translator, depending on the participants' request and level of English.

Data from Additional Schools

The researcher's visits to additional Namibian schools in the Oshana District provided a broader perspective of formal education in Namibia. During additional school visits, the researcher informally collected data that helped to verify the degree to which an observation at Komesho School was typical or atypical. The researcher visited two secondary schools, an agricultural college, a distance education centre, and five additional rural primary schools in northern Namibia. The researcher visited additional primary, secondary, and tertiary schools, as well as 'alternative' education projects (such as Distance Learning and programmes for school-leavers) in Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Uganda.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Chapter Four traces the history of indigenous education, the introduction of European schooling, and the impact of discriminatory 'Bantu Education' policies. First, this chapter investigates the interconnections between education, culture, and community in precolonial African society. Second, this chapter examines the effects of colonialism and Apartheid policies in relation to education, culture, and community. Finally, the regional setting of the case study, Ovamboland, Namibia, are described.

Indigenous Education in Africa

Because African precolonial education was deeply rooted within the community, it is useful to reflect on precolonial education prior to studying school-community relationships within a Namibian community. The following overview highlights the role of the community in indigenous African education.

Traditional education in Africa was interconnected with culture; education and culture did not exist apart from each other. Okah (1977, p. 102) stresses that traditional education was the medium of enculturation and as such was a powerful instrument of cultural maintenance and improvement. Nkomo (1990) also notes that culture, the community, and education were closely intertwined in indigenous education.

Shared responsibility was a key concept in traditional African education. Most often, there were no designated teachers or instructors. Instead, it was the responsibility of the clan and the tribe to teach and impart knowledge and skills to children.

The principle of praxis was the basis of indigenous African education; learning tasks were derived from direct experience with people, concrete objects, and real-life situations. "The learning of anything which is worthwhile was considered as education. And the justification of worthwhile activity is that it contributes to the progress and moral growth of both the individual and the entire tribal community" (Okah, 1977, p. 99). Unlike formal schooling, which tends to remove learners from their natural environments, traditional education occurred within the culture and context of everyday life. Traditional African education was not only to be acquired but also to be lived (Boateng, 1979, p. 3).

In traditional African society, where there is a deep sense of corporate life, the solidarity of the community is maintained in order to avoid the community's disintegration (Mbiti; as cited in Okah, 1977, p. 74). Kinship relationships are strong, and an individual crime is in fact an assault against the community. As Jomo Kenyatta (as cited in Ocitti, 1973) states in *Facing Mount Kenya:* "An individualistic person had no place in the African society. He would be considered a wizard, a person intending to do harm to his fellow men" (p. 106).

Traditional education taught children where and how they fitted into society. It was important that each individual understood his/her obligations to his family, his age group, his clan and to his chiefdom (Ocitti, 1973, p. 106). Although people are free and to a large extent self-determined, they can find ultimate fulfillment only in the company of and in cooperation with members of their community (Senghor; as cited in Okah, 1977, p. 75). Zerbo (as cited in Okah, 1977) points out that African traditional education was central to the concept of community and societal responsibility.

> Education in the African countries cannot be conceived, simply from the standpoint of the pleasure of acquiring knowledge. The African tradition has been to regard education not as an epiphenomenon with respect to community activities, but rather as preparation of the individual whereby he is enabled to take his place in the society as a full citizen. (p. 98)

In traditional African societies, all members of the tribal community are agents of education who have a contribution to make towards the education of the youth. The parents, extended family members, the elders, and the peer group participate actively in the process of traditional education (Okah, 1977, p. 99). Okah argues that the traditional African concept of education reflects what has been described as the "community education approach to learning." Such an approach regards education as a life-centred sociocultural process concerned with problem solving to meet the needs of the community (p. 98). Moreover, traditional education was value oriented; youths were educated for living and coping with the demands of community life (p. 112).

Before the introduction of European schooling in Africa, children learned in their communities through regular contact with people and through the responsibilities that they gradually assumed. Children learned by living and doing:

> In the homes and on the farms they were taught the skills of the society and the behavior expected of its members. They learned the kind of grasses which were suitable for which purposes, the work which had to be done on the crops, or the care which had to be given to animals, by joining with their elders in this work. (Nyerere, 1967; as cited in Sinclair, 1980, p. 22)

Thus, critical Third World educators are questioning the extent to which the advent of schooling has destroyed much of this natural learning process.

Fafunwa (as cited in Okah, 1977, p. 101) outlines a number of aims of traditional African education. These include:

1. To inculcate respect for elders and those in positions of authority.

2. To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs.

3. To understand, appreciate, and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

A common thread in goals of traditional African education is to instill a loyalty to the family and clan, a devotion that is stronger than an individual's self interests.

Formal indigenous teaching existed prior to the introduction of formal 'Western' schooling to Africa. Learning through apprenticeship, for example, is formal and direct. In order to learn a specific trade, children were sent to a skilled craftsperson such as a blacksmith or potter. Also, hereditary positions such as a herbalist would be passed down through formal instruction. Children obtained knowledge from adults on aspects of their livelihood including hunting, cultivating crops, and domestic activities.

Most African societies in southern Africa had created a system of education that began at birth but was marked by an initiation process that ensued at adolescence. The duration of initiations varied according to specific cultural traditions. Common themes in the initiation ceremonies in southern Africa have been identified: "Lessons in manners, roles, responsibilities, values and history accompanied the physical training, the test of endurance and the ability to endure pain" (Nkomo, 1990, p. 20). Those who were charged with the responsibility of overseeing the initiation ceremonies of boys and girls have been referred to as principal educational agents (Scanlon; as cited in Baoteng, 1977, p. 14).

Oral literature is central to informal and indigenous education in traditional Africa. Through oral literature, children learn to respect the values of their society without feeling bombarded with instructions on proper standards of social behaviour (Baoteng, 1977, p. 13). African oral traditions formed an integral part of a community's culture and have been developed to an admirable level (Ocitti, 1973, p. 63).

Okah (1977) argues that in the traditional sense, *knowledge* is not simply the amassing of factual information, but also the capability to transform information into ways of living and acting. Knowledge involves the principle of praxis; to know is to be able to make concrete and practical value judgement on the basis of some information. "Perhaps the Aristotelian concept of 'practical wisdom' best describes the African understanding of knowledge" (p. 56). One acquired knowledge, not for its own sake, but to enable one to cope with life in society. Moreover, knowledge was not a personal matter; it was a communal affair.

The preceding section has outlined and examined major themes within African indigenous education. The history of traditional African education reveals the extent to which the community delivered an education system prior to the establishment of colonial schooling.

Historical Background to Formal Schooling in Namibia

Namibia was politically and geographically termed *South West Africa* by colonial powers prior to its independence in 1990; however, the country's indigenous people referred to their land as Namibia even during its colonial era. Formal schooling in South West Africa began with the settlement of the first missionaries in 1805 at Warmbad. With the arrival of the Europeans came a new religion and a written culture; missionary schools focused on evangelism and basic literacy. From 1805 to 1884, the London, Wesleyan, Rhenish, and Finnish missionaries established schools. Mbamba (1982) records that the Rhenish Mission opened a school at Otjumbingwe for the elementary training of Black teachers in 1866. Missionary education in northern Namibia did not begin until 1870, when Finnish missionaries helped to establish schools in Ovamboland. Education for Africans in this era was limited to 'basic' and primary education.

In 1882 a series of so-called 'land purchases' were made by German merchant Adolf Luderitz from African Chiefs on behalf of the Imperial Government, thus laying the basis for German colonial rule (Goldblatt; as cited in Mbamba, 1982, p. 32). Education during German colonial rule (1884-1915) saw the growth of mission schools. The colonial government and missions established separate schools for Africans, Coloureds, and Whites.

The majority of African and Coloured schools were controlled and administered by the missions, but the colonial administration had the right to inspect them. Mission schools focused on teaching religion, carpentry, and brickmaking for boys and 'domestic sciences' for girls. Schools for Whites were under colonial administration that took measures to make education for all White children compulsory for eight years. The colonial government financed education for Whites, whereas the missions bore the financial burden of their schools until 1902 when the colonial administration began to provide small grants to missions teaching the German language. During German colonial rule, advanced education for Africans was not considered.

In 1915 South Africa invaded German South West Africa on behalf of the British Empire. The South African government established a military administration that operated within the socioeconomic structures of the German colonial administration.

Following World War I, the newly formed League of Nations envisioned a form of trusteeship where territories that were too "small," "remote," or "backward" to be declared independent would progress toward independence with external assistance. In 1918 General Smuts (as cited in Cockram, 1976) wrote in a pamphlet entitled *The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion* that territories formerly belonging to Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey should not be annexed, and "in the future government of these territories and peoples the rule of self-determination . . . shall be fairly and reasonably applied" (p. 37). In January 1919 the Mandates System was accepted at the Paris Peace Conference and South Africa was given the mandate to administer South West Africa.

Once South Africa assumed its mandate, plans were made to organise the educational services and bring these under central control. The first Educational Act of 1921 provided for government control over all education services—both European and non-European. However, education for the African in reality remained in the hands of the mission schools on the condition that "they would also conform to government regulations regarding the establishment, recognition, control, syllabuses and classification of schools, the employment of teachers and conditions of services and inspection" (O'Callaghan, 1977, p.97).

In 1923 a conference attended by the South African government and the missions convened to discuss the content of African education. As a result of the conference, the use of African languages was not encouraged because of the lack of reading materials. Moreover, schooling for Africans was limited to four years (additional classes would require the approval of the Inspector of Schools), and African teachers would continue to be trained. Missionary societies continued and extended schooling activities in the 1930s.

The transfer of education control that occurred in 1949 was closely linked with the political events in South Africa. When the Nationalist Party came into power in 1948, their apartheid policies were created and ready to be implemented. The Nationalist Party, as the opposition party in 1945, declared in the House of Assembly that "education is the key to the creation of the proper relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans. . . . There should be reform of the whole educational system" (O'Callaghan, 1977, p. 99). Education became an important means by which apartheid policy was implemented in order to protect the privileges of the Whites.

In 1949 the Eiselen Commission formed in order to study the principles and aims of education for Natives. As an "independent race," their "inherent racial qualities," their "distinctive characteristics and aptitudes," and their "needs under ever-changing social conditions" (Eiselen as cited in O'Callaghan, 1997, p. 99) were to be taken into consideration. The Commission brought out its report in 1951, and its contents were embodied in the 1953 Bantu Education Act (which was later amended in 1954, 1956, 1959, and 1961). Hendrik Verwoerd (as cited in Vicencio, 1988), known as the architect of Bantu Education, argued that mission schools sought to create a class of educated elite Africans which "has learnt to believe that it is above its own people and feels that its spiritual, economic and political home is among the civilized community of South Africa" (p. 97).

The South African government desired to maintain the White societal order, and education was a tool to achieve this end. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 officially applied apartheid policy to education; the Department of Education in South Africa now determined the curriculum of the entire Bantu Education system. Bantu education was moved from missionaries to the state, partly because of the need to resource the planned expansion, but also because the churches could no longer be trusted to transmit the apartheid ideology correctly (Harber, 1993).

Unlike White education, education for Blacks was neither compulsory nor tax-supported. In addition to the glaring unequal distribution of educational resources, Black education aimed to train young people for a position of servitude in an apartheid society.

In 1958, the Bantu Education Act was supplemented by the *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Non-European Education in South West Africa,* which laid down the basis for an education policy specifically for Namibia. A primary purpose of the inquiry was to assess how South Africa's apartheid education might be implemented in Namibia. The Commission noted similarities between South West African "natives" and the Bantu of the Union and reasoned that South West African Education should follow in the steps of Bantu Education (O'Callaghan, 1977, p. 106).

The Commission concluded that two fundamental weaknesses existed; one in the finance and the administration of education in Namibia. In the first case, Africans were not encouraged to contribute financially, and this was seen to have a negative effect on parental responsibility and commitment to schooling. Second, the community was not significantly involved in educational planning.

The Commission recommended, therefore, the introduction of a special levy for education purposes under which the Africans themselves would largely finance Bantu Education. It also recommended that mission schools, excluding teacher training and secondary schools, be transformed into *community schools* under the control of "native school committees" (Mbamba, 1982, p. 62). Mission schools that refused to hand over their schools would forfeit government aid. Moreover, the South African regime began to expel or refuse re-entry visas to missionaries/teachers who were critical of the Bantu Education Policy.

Thus, after 1958 missionary activities were discouraged in the attempt to align Namibian education with South African education. No new sites were granted for missionary schools, and by the time the Ondendall Report was published in 1963, 112 out of 215 schools in the Northern sector and 22 out of 101 in the Southern sector were converted to 'community schools.'

Nationalist educators described Bantu education as a "Community School System." Education must

> train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live. . . . Education should have its roots entirely in the Native areas and in the Native environment and Native community. . . . The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. (Verwoerd; as cited in Vicencio, 1988, p. 95)

Under the guise of community participation in education, the Bantu Education Act was a proactive measure to thwart Namibia's fight for independence and to ensure strict segregation between Blacks and Whites.

Namibian resistance to South African rule led to the emergence of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) formed in 1960, which struggled for 30 years to successfully carry out a liberation movement. With the intent to foster national unity and create a generation of new leaders, SWAPO identified the following educational goals: (a) training of technical and professional cadres, (b) work-oriented functional literacy, (c) teacher training to enable free and universal education for all Namibians from primary to tertiary education, (d) striving toward the elimination of tribal or feudal mentality, and (e) training medical personnel (Mbamba, 1982).

African teachers who did not accept South Africa's script aligned themselves with this political group. At considerable risk to themselves and their students, SWAPO teachers countered the South Africa's ideology and promoted national independence. SWAPO or alternate schools were established in Namibia and beyond Namibia's borders; students studied in exile in African countries such as Angola and Tanzania as well as abroad. However, most students, who did not receive sponsorship to study outside Namibia, were unable to progress through higher levels of formal education.

The syllabi of Tanzania and Zambia provided the basis for Namibian education that emerged under SWAPO. In addition, Namibia adopted the agricultural goals of Tanzanian and Zambian schools. However, during the struggle for independence, implementing an appreciation for labour remained largely theoretical in nature.

Educational goals in SWAPO schools were created to correspond with SWAPO's socialist ideals: to develop a collective purpose and destiny among Namibian people and to create a classless, nonexploitative society. SWAPO's strong socialist position was later moderated as the party sought international support prior to and during the transition to independence.

When Namibia gained political independence from South Africa in 1990, the newly formed Namibian Ministry of Basic Education had the formidable task of combining 11 separate educational districts, changing the national language from Afrikaans to English, and radically altering a curriculum steeped in apartheid philosophy. Reports from Namibia's educational journal, *Reform Forum,* promote a participatory and communicative pedagogy (MBEC, 1995). Educational reforms encourage collaboration between principals, educators, and support teachers rather than a hierarchical framework. Yet, Harber (1993) notes that

> while government publications since independence have rightly stressed the need to improve the quality of education, the emphasis has been on a better organised and more efficient bureaucratic hierarchy rather than on the need to change the nature of education in a more democratic direction. (p. 420)

Clive Harber (1993), in his assessment of the history of education in Namibia, reports that despite SWAPO's policy changes in the 1980s, the classroom environment remained essentially authoritarian. Harber observed authoritarian teaching styles first-hand and concluded that without critical inquiry, there is always the danger that one political orthodoxy is simply replaced by another (albeit not so unpleasant) after independence. The educational goals of SWAPO schools fundamentally differed from South Africa's educational aims. However, it cannot be assumed that SWAPO's teaching methods were unlike their colonial rulers (Harber, 1993).

Namibia maintains a socialist ideal of 'education for all' while facing the problem of school leavers, especially at the secondary levels. In 1991, the progression rates between primary and secondary levels were less than 10% in Namibia. And in 1995, 34 000 girls attended Grade 1, whereas only 5 000 girls attended Grade 12. This problem has led Namibia's Ministry of Education and Culture to address the issue of young people and adults who have received at best only a basic education.

Ovamboland, Namibia

The original inhabitants of southern Africa were the San and the closely related Khoi, who probably had their origin from a group of San who adopted the keeping of animals through contact with Bantu-speaking peoples (Afigbo, 1986, p. 214). Before 1830, Namibia was inhabited by a number of ethnic groups that occupied separate territories or "states" (Mbamba, 1982, p. 31).

The research location is within the Ovambo territory and is populated by the Ovambo group (see map #3 in Appendix A). The Ovambo group, which had migrated from the north through present Angola and Zambia, lived in the northern part of the Territory—an area which extended into Angola. This group lived independently in large communities and practised both agriculture and pastoralism.

The term *Ovambo* is derived from *ovajamba,* which means rich people. The Ovambo are made up of seven tribes that live in Ovamboland: the Kwanyama, Ndonga, Kwambi, Ngandjera, Kwaluudhi, Mbalantu, and Kolonkadhi-Eunda. The population of Ovamboland is about 800 000, which is approximately 46% of Namibia's population.

The Ovambo are a branch of the Bantu language family, and they are the northern most tribes of the Southern Bantu. Although the Ovambo are considered to be the original inhabitants of Ovamboland, there are differing opinions about the route they took to Ovamboland. Most ethnologists and anthropologists suggest that they migrated southwards from the upper reaches of the Zambesi in the 14th century. The Ovambo, as agriculturists, decided to remain in the North, possibly attracted to the fertile soil (Hahn, 1966, Tuupainen, 1970).

The social organisation of the Ovambo is matrilineal, and the mother's brother is an important person in terms of authority, succession, and inheritance. Each tribe is subdivided into clans in which membership is inherited through the mother, whose family name the children bear. In contemporary Ovamboland's political order, tribes are individually subject to the autonomous authority of hereditary headmen who are the administrative heads in every tribe. Tribes have been subdivided into districts that are governed by senior headmen (*elenga).*

The land is semi-arid, yet these conditions are due not only to the geography of the country, but also to the destruction wrought by war. During more than two decades of war, the South African military establishment destroyed vegetation in northern Namibia in pursuit of freedom fighters. Desertification has also impacted the country. The region of the case study, Ongwediva, refers to *tiger*—at one time an abundant vegetation supported a population of tigers.

The post-colonial presence of South Africa is evident in the agricultural disparities within rural Namibia. In 1986 commercial farming provided a lucrative income for some 5,000 white farmers who owned more than 95% of the marketed agricultural output (Kaakunga, 1994). The Whites' domination over policies and practices of water development impeded Black Namibians' agricultural developments during the South African administration. In 1986 more than 90% of the dams and bore holes served White-owned ranches and settlements.

In 1990, after independence, the bulk of the commercial agricultural output continued to originate from White areas in Southern Namibia. Output for Black Namibians in the North is primarily used for the producers' own consumption. Currently, unlike commercial farms in the South, agriculture in the North is predominantly labour intensive—subsistence farming that is dependent on rainfall.

During the colonialist era, as was the case with cattle and agriculture, highly productive mines were expropriated by foreign leaders. Due to the methods of mining and the means of extracting minerals from the land, the degree of exploitation of migrant labour power continues to be high. Namibia holds 16.6% of the world's gem diamond reserves; it is the second largest producer of lithium and vanadium in the world and holds half of the world's reserves of germanium. However, 'intersectorial' linkages of the mineral industry are weak; virtually all output produced is exported, and the bulk of its needs are provided through imports.

Critics such as Mabogunje (as cited in Obasanjo, 1990, p. 109) argue that in Namibia's post-apartheid society, land reform is a prerequisite to agricultural development. Moreover, agricultural development must be based on a historical understanding of the geography and culture. Because agricultural practices are embedded within a traditional kinship system, development efforts must complement the system that is in place.

Namibia's post-apartheid era seeks to eradicate former impositions of apartheid, yet stark inequalities persist in the quality of education in Northern Namibia in contrast to Central and Southern Namibia. For example, in the Oshana region, where Komesho School is located, there are 1,423 teachers for 50,083 learners. In the capital city region of Khomas there are 1,787 teachers for 39,401 learners (MBEC, 1996). In the Khomas region 100% of schools have a water supply, whereas in the Oshana region 70% of schools have a water supply (MBEC, 1996).

In the rural areas of Northern Namibia informal learning occurs within the context of agricultural life. Responsibilities for children include herding cattle and small stock; assisting in collecting firewood; tending crops, fetching water; pounding corn; and caring for younger siblings. 'Traditional' industries that young people learn include agriculture, basketry, pottery, wood carving, iron and copper work, and masonry. Children also assist parents by selling cakes and produce at open markets. Young people, especially school leavers, may leave rural areas to find work within towns such as Oshakati.

The term *Kovakulunhu* in the Oshykwanyama language is translated as *parents* in English, but it is actually a somewhat broader term, carrying an attitude of respect and including all older persons, as well as caregivers looking after children who may or may not be their biological offspring. Thus, *Kovakulunhu* includes grandparents, relatives, or friends who have responsibility for children. In this case study, *parents/guardians* is used to refer to this extended definition to clarify that the term is not limited to biological parents.

Despite this definition of *Kovakulunhu,* and my use of the phrase parents/guardians, it is the mother's relationship to her clan, rather than the father's, that is important with respect to the children. A mother's sister (*Meme gona,* small mother) a mother's mother, or a mother's great-aunt (*Tate kulululwa)* will take responsibility for children if their biological mother is not able to do so. If children are orphans, they will be raised by the mother's clan. The mother's relationship with her clan is an important one in respect to the children. As one participant explained: "The [maternal] grandmother is always in the village, and she will take care of the kids."

Families (parents/guardians, their children, and additional extended family members or relatives) live in *homesteads* that are traditionally constructed of a number of wood structures that include a kitchen area, sleeping areas, meeting circles, and food-storage structures. In some 'modern' homesteads, one or more structures are constructed with bricks or cement. The size of homesteads ranges from 25 to 50 metres in diameter, and each homestead has been allocated a plot of farming land. The distance between homesteads ranges from 200 metres to 2 kilometres (see map #4 in Appendix A).

CHAPTER FIVE

DEFINING COMMUNITY AND EDUCATIONAL ROLES

Chapter Five explores the participants' definitions of community. Teachers' relationship to the community and the sense of community that exists among parents are also described. This chapter proceeds to give an account of the diverse educational roles and responsibilities that exist within the community. Those who hold educational responsibilities include teachers, parents/guardians, additional community members, Namibia's primary health care nurses, the MBEC, and the National Institute of Educational Development (NIED). This chapter also investigates the relationship between formal and informal learning, the learning that occurs within and outside of the formal education system. Finally, the discussion concludes with a description of the collaboration that exists among all educational stakeholders. In order to set the stage for this case study, this chapter begins with a description of the community and Komesho School.

Description of Komesho School and Its Surrounding Community

The research site includes Komesho School and the families who send their children to the school, who live within approximately a 7-kilometre radius of the school. As described earlier, homesteads, with a plot of farming land are located throughout the community; mahango is the predominant crop that is grown in this region and the staple food for subsistence farmers. An extended family resides in each homestead, and about 25 to 35 homesteads are in each of the four villages served by the school. Different families, clans, and tribes may be represented in one village because the seven tribes that are represented in Ovamboland tribe have resettled and integrated among themselves. Resettlement occurs when land becomes exhausted or the soil's minerals are depleted. One participant estimated that the present villages in this community have remained in this region for 80 to 100 years.

The people of the research site are members of the Ovambo ethnic group and predominantly from the Kwanyama tribe, who speak Oshykwanyama. This language is spoken only by the Kwanyama tribe; however, the seven Ovambo tribes speak varying dialects of a language group that is understood by the entire ethnic group.

Komesho School serves primarily four villages; namely, Onamutayi, Ukango, Omaheke, and Oshikwiyu. Each village is under the leadership of a headman, the *elenga.* Ten to 15 villages are under the leadership of a senior headman, the *oshikandjo.* Additionally, villages may or may not have an elders' council, which is made up of senior people in the village who meet in order to address a broad spectrum of concerns or issues that may arise in their village. The elders' council also acts as a mediator for disputes.

Komesho School is located on the western periphery of Ongwediva College of Education (OCE). The college grounds include a lecture hall, administrative and classroom buildings, a sports field, students' housing, and OCE teacher educators' housing. However, the teacher educators' children did not attend Komesho School because a nearby English medium school was their preferred choice. The researcher resided on the campus of Ongwediva College of Education (OCE) with the family of a Namibian educator who had studied at the University of Alberta.

A Lutheran mission lies 1 kilometre to the east, where a church, human rights centre, and elders' centre are located (see map #4 in Appendix A). In addition, walking paths provide access to homesteads, the Mission, and the school. The paved main road that leads to Oshakati town is located approximately 1 kilometre south of the school. The school's proximity to Oshakati town (11 kilometres from Komesho School) and the main paved road is significant. Unlike many rural schools located far beyond the main road, Komesho School is easily accessible to all vehicles. Moreover, the four villages that surround Komesho School are exposed to the emerging urbanisation of Oshakati town. For example, some parents/guardians sell goods at the Open Market in Oshakati and a small number of parents/guardians are employed within the town.

Because approximately 40% of Namibia's 1.7 million people live in Ovamboland, there are a relatively high number of schools in this region. Lower primary schools include grades 1-4; upper primary schools include grades 5-7; combined primary schools include grades 1-7; junior secondary schools include grades 8-10; and senior secondary schools include grades 11-12. One English Medium Combined Primary School is located 2 kilometres west of Komesho School and an upper primary school is located 2 km to the east of Komesho School (see map #4). A second primary school is approximately 6 kilometres to the west; two combined primary schools, in Oshakati town; a senior secondary school, 2 kilometres to the North, and two additional secondary schools, in Oshakati. Private preprimary (kindergarten) schools have been established in Oshakati. A technical vocational college and a Distance Learning Centre are situated on the periphery of Oshakati town, and an Agricultural College is located to the west of Oshakati.

Komesho School contains Grades 1 through 5; there is currently no preprimary/kindergarten class (preprimary schooling is not funded by the MBEC). There are 11 teachers, 1 principal, and 12 classrooms. Class sizes range from 20 (in the special-needs class) to 40 students. From Grades 1 to 3, Oshykwanyama is the medium of instruction, and English is a curricular subject. Grades 1 to 3 texts are written in Oshykwanyama, in Roman orthography. In Grades 4 and 5 English is the medium of instruction. The school is a permanent cement construction, with the exception of one unfinished Grade 5 classroom constructed with corrugated iron sheets.

The Komesho School Board is composed of 10 members: 5 teachers (including the principal) who are elected by Komesho teachers, and 5 parents/guardians who are elected by parents/guardians at a parents' meeting. Issues in which the school board has decision-making powers include "disciplinary action concerning unprofessional conduct of teachers; fund-raising for the school fund; authorisation of school fund expenditure; compilation and interpretation of school rules; and development of extramural activities" (MBEC, 1990, p. 11). As is discussed in Chapter Six, the responsibilities of the school board include specific schooling domains, whereas foundational educational decisions are made at the National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) and the MBEC.

Participants' Definitions of Community

The majority of participants defined *community* as the people who live in a surrounding area. The term community primarily describes all families who live in the school's surrounding vicinity, who may or may not have children attending the school. The participants also expanded this definition. For example, an educator from the Ongwediva Resource Centre pointed out: "There is really an interdependence between the people, nature, and the school. And all together I would say this is the community" (C1, Feb. 18).

Students from OCE also noted that community embraces not only the people, but the natural resources in an area.

Teachers' Relationships With the Community

Because some Komesho teachers live near Oshakati town rather than in the villages where the majority of learners live, some parents perceive that teachers are removed from their local community. One grandparent who is raising children from Komesho commented: "The teachers—they are very far. They cannot see what is happening here; they only see what is happening in Oshakati" (P3, April 2). One parent/guardian emphasised that many learners live several kilometres from Komesho; therefore, "maybe the teacher did not know how long is the distance of that child." She stated that because some teachers are from the town and drive vehicles to school, they are not in touch with the situation of learners who are from the rural areas (P4, March 18).

The reflection that "teachers are far" refers to their spatial distance from the school and their residence near Oshakati town. This reflection also alludes to the teachers' socioeconomic distance from many community members. Although primary teachers' salaries are not high, class differences between educators and rural farmers are emerging and to some degree isolating teachers from the communities in which they serve.

However, some Komesho teachers live near the school in a rural homestead and practice subsistence farming in addition to teaching. And those teachers who live in a house 'in town' also have a rural home village within the vicinity. Such teachers often spend their weekends and holidays working on their crops in the rural areas. Teachers who live in a 'dichotomised' lifestyle reported that they understand what it means to live in a rural village. The researcher visited one teacher at her home in Oshakati. This teacher explained:

> We really know that our community has different problems. . . . We can just look to our children to find . . . some children, they are putting on their shoes but they are not good. Or the time is too cold, but the child is not putting on the clothes or shoes. . . . They have a problem even with food; you could find some children who are sleepy—it's just because they could not get some food.'

This teacher also stated:

> Community, to my own understanding, is the people around the school, the people who have something to say to the school whether they have children here or whether they do not have children... And I think teachers are also included in the community. And even though they are not around but they are far, they have the right to say something here in the school. (T3, March 15)

The Komesho principal described how she is part of her community.

> If I want to teach a lesson on local history and there is an older person who lives near me, I can ask this person and then come to school and give the lesson myself. Or, since I am from this region, I will probably know the history myself. I am within the community and part of it. (T1, March 20)

Teachers explained that making visits to learners' homes is difficult. One teacher pointed out the missed opportunity to communicate with parents who do not attend parents' meetings. "[The teachers] cannot say they are going to the village—it would be difficult" (T2, Feb. 26). The challenges of reaching parents include long distances and the lack of available time. In the face of these difficulties, the Ministry of Education is encouraging teachers to maintain closer relationships with their communities. The Ministry has given a general mandate for closer community relationships, but there appears to be a lack of specific school policies to support this mandate. For example, many primary schools, including Komesho, do not have a policy to invite or visit parents each term.

A Grade 3 teacher responded to the question, "Do you see the parents on the weekend or after school?"

> No, we don't really have enough time. When we go home on the weekend we just go home to work on the fields, because we are also having our fields. . . . There are some kids in a nearby village which are not from your family, but you don't have time to talk with them about education; you just go there for your work. . . . When we go home to the community you cannot just start [teaching something] unless the person has asked for such [information]. (T4, March 4)

One teacher affirmed that the flow of exchanged ideas and assistance between the teachers and the community is reciprocal:

> We [teachers] are also involved in the community, so if something happens [at school] we have to inform the community and they have to help us. . . . If they have a problem they just come and ask us and we explain everything to them. (T3, Feb. 13)

The community extends assistance to each other with an understanding of the community's shared needs. One Komesho teacher identified two community needs, "better houses" and good health:

> We can't tell them how to [build better houses], but they know how to be with better houses. The problem is that they are 'never mind,' careless, or money can be a problem. But what [teachers] do for them is only to tell them about health [issues], because some parents don't know what is healthy. (T4, March 4)

The majority of teachers at Komesho School have been hired by the school board members, who select teachers who are an integral part of their local community. This decentralised selection process has fostered the teachers' intimate and mutual understanding of their community's needs.

The degree to which a socioeconomic gap between teachers and parents impacts this shared understanding of needs depends on internal and external factors. For example, some teachers have goals and aspirations to move beyond their rural community. A dialectical political and economic ideology encourages teachers to participate in their local setting and yet pulls teachers to move 'upward' to an urban or 'modern' environment. Also, Namibia's economic climate, which does not financially reward small-scale farming, is another factor that challenges 'community education' goals.

The Sense of Community Among Komesho Parents/Guardians

The respondents indicated that although the community is made up of a diversity of people, children's education is a central community interest. For example, one father responded to the question: "Do the neighbours in this area have shared interests or different interests?" He replied: "We do have the same interest because we do send our children to school."

The majority of homes in the community have several children, and parents/guardians indicated a strong interest in their children's upbringing and learning processes. One parent stated: "Everyone has their own interests. But when it comes to school, I think people are gathering together. . . . it is the first, the first thing in the community" (P4, March 18).

This parent further explained that the community holds a common interest in the academic progress of the community's children. Hence, children's education appeared to be a common denominator amongst the participants. One respondent stated:

> You can find at the end of the term, everybody, neighbours, they like to know what your child has done at school: "Oh, did you pass or fail?" "No, I failed." "Yes, I told you that you kids, you never read, you never listen to your teachers." (P4, March 18)

This participant further pointed out that neighbours take an interest in education because schooling is deemed to be a vehicle to a good career. Moreover, "neighbours" hold a sense of responsibility for children; the responsibility does not solely rest with biological parents.

> My neighbours, what we like to do if I help my child but she does not understand, I will ask my neighbour: "Please, go and help her in this subject, and she will understand you better than me." Or, "Ask my child if she understands about this and this." (P4, March 18)

The participants described how the community works together to promote their children's well-being. Parents/guardians are concerned about the deep floodwaters that came with the heavy rainfall this year; drownings have occurred in the past. One grandparent explained that a meeting was initiated by the community in order to discuss the problem of floodwaters, as well as the need for a preprimary class:

> So it is the villages who are having these kids in the homes—like this one (gestures to girl, age eight). I have two grandchildren; one is eight and one is seven, so up to now they haven't started school, so they just stay in this house. As parents, we think it is better to come together, and we can go back again to the village headman so that he can take the case seriously. (P3, April 2)

Another parent explained:

> Some [neighbours], they see the children who are very far from the school; the children have to even pass three rivers. The child [leaves home] at around 6 o'clock, and at that time it is very dark, and really you are concerned about that child. The kids are very small and they will tire—it's too dangerous. . . . Those [neighbours] who are next to the river, sometimes in the mornings they wait to help the kids to pass through the water. (P4, March 18)

Due to long walking distances to school and the dangerous floodwaters, the community has attempted to have a preprimary school built.

The main highway is an additional danger; a young child was killed by an oncoming vehicle on the main road that is used as a walking route for some Komesho students. Two grandparents who are guardians also explained how parents came together to discuss hazards that have resulted in fatalities: "We used to come and talk, especially about the dangers of the tar road and also the problem of this water. Some children used to drown in the flood waters" (P5, April 2). At the time of the study, parents/guardians had not given up their plan for a new preprimary school, but they were waiting for the village headman and, ultimately, the Ministry to take further action.

Parents also collaborate to address the issues of attendance and punctuality:

> If I see my neighbour's son is always late at school, I have to go and ask my neighbour, "Can you wake him earlier than to be always late for the morning lessons?" And if you sometimes find those who don't like school, if at 11 or 12 o'clock the child is already [home], . . . you can talk to that child and ask what is the problem. (P4, March 18)

Agricultural work is also an integral part of this community. The progress of mahango crops was a topic of conversation; some neighbours hold 'competitions' to see whose crops were taller. The heavy rains that fell this year were welcomed by the majority of farmers, although some crops were flooded. One farmer remarked that the 1997 rains were the most abundant rains in 25 years. The majority of community members, including children, have responsibilities in their family's mahango fields.

This section has reflected on the sense of community that exists among parents/guardians. The following section addresses the educational roles of the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture and the National Institute of Educational Development, parents/guardians, teachers, and additional community members, such as primary health care nurses.

Educational Roles Within the Community

Health Issues and the Role of the Community

Since 1992 the Ministry of Health has sponsored a Primary Health Care (PHC) school visitation programme that provides health services for children and families. I interviewed a PHC team supervisor for the Ondangua District at her office in Oshakati Hospital. The supervisor outlined the mandate of the PHC programme, which is to address the following issues: personal hygiene, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, nutrition, prevention of malaria, alcohol and drug abuse, growth monitoring, road accidents, and teenage pregnancies.

The supervisor explained that the PHC programme intersects and cooperates with the Ministry of Social Services. PHC nurses also work with HIV counsellors and the Department of Public Health.

PHC nurses take a holistic view of the learners; children are assessed for their physical, psychological, and social well-being. Learners undergo a "detailed, physical, and systematic examination" and receive appropriate vaccinations.

The PHC team also checks to see if the school surroundings are safe for the children. For example, long grass in wet areas is a hazard for malaria. The buildings are assessed for safety concerns and inquires are made to see if the school has toilets and clean drinking water. The Department of Public Health writes a report on their findings.

The PHC team provides an advanced level of health education; teachers reported that students would not otherwise receive this information. In varying grade levels students are engaged in discussions on personal hygiene, nutrition, AIDS, and malaria. The researcher observed students asking challenging questions and nurses clarifying misconceptions.

Parents/guardians benefit from the health education that is offered in schools; for example, children receive pamphlets to bring home to their parents. The Ministry of Health has prepared pamphlets, written in the Oshykwanyama language, on topics including malnourishment, skin disorders, dysentery, and AIDS. Also, parents/guardians and families with specific health needs can request a home visit, which will be carried out by one member of the PHC team on the day of the school visit.ii

The community health care nurses work closely with teachers. For example, teachers at Komesho identify learners who they believe should receive medical attention. Teachers see their learners every day and are likely to know which children will need a detailed examination. Moreover, in order for children to receive their immunisations and physical examinations, teachers must ensure that learners take their health passports on the day of the PHC visit.

A communication chain links PHC nurses, the principal, learners, and parents/guardians. If a learner requires a referral for a doctor, the principal of the school receives a medical form that the learner must take home. It is then the responsibility of the parent/guardian to take a child to a clinic or hospital. If the child's ailment or injury is severe, the principal will take the child directly to a hospital.

If child abuse is suspected, the learner is referred to a doctor, and parents/guardians will receive information on parenting and disciplining skills. Or, one Komesho teacher pointed out, teachers may "refer a child to Social Services if a child show signs of abuse or neglect." This teacher added that "if the visits were regular, then a child who is neglected will be treated earlier" (T7, March 3).

The school is an ideal location to reach young people who may not otherwise receive a medical examination and health education. A nurse explained that although some learners' parents/guardians may take their child to a clinic, others may not keep up to date with their children's immunisations. And although parents/guardians pay a fee for clinical or hospital visits, the PHC service to schools is free. During the Komesho primary health care visit, one nurse explained: "If the children are having a problem, it might not otherwise be identified. . . . If a child is having an ear problem, we must refer her to a doctor" (C4, March 3). Thus, the PHC team provides health services that could not be offered by teachers or parents/guardians. Community health visits illustrate the vital role of trained professionals in the school arena.

The above discussion has focused attention on the PHC nurses who are on the front lines of Namibia's community health care initiatives. These data have highlighted how PHC nurses integrate health services into the community largely through the school. The following account illuminates the work of the community members (especially parents/guardians and teachers), who often work independently of the PHC programme to address health issues.

One Komesho parent/guardian who works in a Human Rights Office (located 1 kilometre from Komesho School) described how children can report abuse:

> They have a women and child abuse unit at Oshakati Hospital. They can go there, and those people will explain to the parent that it is very important not to harm your child. They don't [beat their child] because they want to harm their child, but they do it under the influence of liquor. (P4, March 19)

On questioning, this parent/guardian admitted that few young children have the knowledge or capability to visit the clinic independently. In order to inform more families about human rights issues, a human rights team visits secondary schools and children's Sunday schools.

The special-needs teacher at Komesho explained that it is possible to contact Social Services if child neglect or abuse is suspected. This teacher recounted an incident in 1996 when she discovered why a Grade 4 student was not performing satisfactorily in class (T7, March 11). The student's mother endeavoured to raise seven children on her own, but poverty forced her to give away four children. This teacher acted as a liaison on behalf of the family and arranged for Social Services to visit and provide food for the family. In *School and Community,* OECD (1975) states an outcome of community education: When teachers and schools make use of outside resources and resource people, teachers' roles become more that of *facilitators*.

The majority of teachers at Komesho were aware that some children in the community are malnourished and 'neglected.' During an interview with two teachers I asked: "How are the parents involved at Komesho School?"

> T7: Some of the parents, they take care of their kids; they give them enough food to eat before they come to school. But some parents, they don't. We have some children who are feeling weak and sleepy in class because of hunger. . . . And some [children], their clothes are clean, but some are not.
>
> T8: This problem [exists] because most of the kids who come to this school, they don't live with their parents; they live with their grandfathers and grandmothers. Their mothers, some went for work and that caused many problems—the [grandparents] are very old to take care of the kids. (T7, T8, March 11)

Another Komesho teacher echoed the same concern over the well-being of children in their community:

> The main problem that we have is children are staying only with their grandmothers and grandfathers. Their mothers and fathers—they are not around. Some, they are in Windhoek [800 kilometres south]; some, they spend even five years there without coming home. And [the grandparents] don't have money, and they are old, and they are not healthy. [The mothers] just come [to the village] to drop another kid; they just produce and drop and go. (T3, March 11)

Teachers estimated that 40% of the learners at Komesho live with one or two grandparents rather than living with their biological parents.

The root causes of biological parents leaving children in this rural community often extend beyond the realms of the community. Many young people (including single mothers) have adopted a mindset that 'those who are educated' should move beyond rural village life. Participants reported that the majority of people who are currently moving to urban environments in search of employment can be generally described as 18- to 25-year-old individuals who hold basic levels of education. In this study, *basic education* often refers to 10 years of schooling (a high number of students in Northern Namibia are 'pushed out' of formal schooling after Grade 10 if their marks are low). Many urban migrants face underemployment, poor living conditions, and disconnection from extended family. Biological mothers (who are often single parents) are less willing to raise children in such conditions, and grandparents or relatives who live in villages often accept children who are returned to rural areas. Moreover, the participants explained that some children in this community are orphans due to fatalities in the struggle for independence, car accidents, AIDS, malaria, and other fatal illnesses.

Agriculture in northern Namibia is primarily labour-intensive, subsistence farming, dependent on rainfall. A severe drought in the north and the inheritance of unequal land-distribution policies from the South African regime have compounded the socioeconomic difficulties that Ovambo farmers face. Although Black Namibians are seeking land redistribution and reforms, former land allocations and agricultural inequalities remain. For example, in 1986 White farmers in southern and central Namibia owned more than 95% of the marketed agricultural output (Kaakunga, 1990, p. 94). In view of the challenges of subsistence farming, the current 'educated' generation is searching for employment outside of the rural setting.

Young children who remain with grandparents and relatives in this community may not receive adequate attention from their caregivers, who are burdened with farming responsibilities. The researcher observed teachers providing children with food (such as fruit or traditional bread) and clothing (for example, second-hand uniforms). Also, learners who do not have a lunch at school take food from those who do. Biological parents who are employed or 'underemployed' in an urban centre do not necessarily contribute financially to their children's school fees, uniforms, or additional needs.

Shared Educational Responsibilities

The MBEC and the community surrounding Komesho together contribute to school resources such as textbooks, teachers, and class buildings. Although Namibia's government dedicates a large percentage of its budget to Basic Education, the community's financial contributions are necessary in order to increase the quality of education to learners. For example, Komesho parents financed a classroom, constructed with corrugated iron sheets and an unfinished floor, in order to accommodate Grade 5 learners. A parent/guardian explained the necessity of the class building project:

> Sometimes the child will just end up staying in the house because of the shortage of the classrooms. . . . They constructed a new classroom at Komesho, especially for these

> ones [pointing out her two Grade 5 grandchildren]. Otherwise, these ones would stay in the house because there was no room for them [at the nearby Senior Primary School]. If we did not contribute, they would have stayed at home. . . . We find there is a need for a classroom, so we just have to try by all means and get the money. (P5, April 2)

Another parent stated:

> What I mostly see is parents/guardians are the ones most involved in developing schools. . . . The government helps, yes, because of the books or materials, but if it comes to buildings, the buildings are brought up by parents. . . . I think the parents/guardians are more interested. (P4, March 18)

Interviewed community members expressed a willingness to contribute to the school's additional classroom. The following excerpt expresses a view that was shared by the majority of participants: "If parents/guardians are able to contribute additional finances, the learners are able to receive additional resources" (P3, Feb. 6).[iv]

In addition, some community members who are not necessarily parents/guardians are willing to contribute to school projects such as building classrooms for additional classes. "So some people, they do understand about education. Whether or not they have a child at that particular school, they participate in helping schools. But we don't have so many cases [of community involvement]" (T3, March 11).

The MBEC is more willing to supplement schools' resources after the community initially contributes. One Komesho teacher described the situation:

> The government, the educational planner, was here, and he told us our classes should continue up to Grade 7. They promised us that they will come and build some classes—he showed us where they will build the classes. But we don't know when they will come. In our country the government helps those who help themselves. If you try to build something, some classes, never

> mind if you use a hut, they will see that you really need classes, and they will come to you. (T5, Feb. 25)

The majority of participants referred to their contributions to building classes as an example of community participation. This community, like other communities in northern Namibia, is willing to contribute finances to their school's construction projects. However, this minimal form of community involvement is at best a veneer of participation because the community is not integral to foundational educational issues.

The MBEC appears to be sending ambiguous messages to the community. It stresses the community's responsibility to build and maintain schools and yet states that *broad community participation* will increase the relevance and quality of education. In the Ministry's policy document *Education For All* (MBEC, 1993), several references point to the community's specific task of building classes (pp. 40, 166, 174). However, in the MBEC documents, such as the *Namibian Educational Code of Conduct For Schools* and *Education for All*, the Ministry proposes that educators

> work diligently and consistently to facilitate broad participation in making the major decisions about our education and how we implement them. . . . Schools are organised to enable [the community] to be active participants in school governance, active contributors to discussions of school management and administration and active evaluators of the quality of instruction and learning. (p. 42)

Educators hold the reins of educational authority and are in a position to invite meaningful community participation. Yet, only a minority of participants, all of them Ongwediva College educators, argued that community participation must move beyond financial contributions to school buildings.

The Relationship Between Formal and Informal Education

The majority of participants in this study referred to the learning that occurs in daily experiences as valuable yet separate from the learning that occurs in school. For example, two grandparents who were guardians to children at Komesho described the learning that takes place at home:

> The learning at school is not enough. At home we teach children how to behave, how to fit in the society, and which jobs they might do when they grow up. I can tell them this at home. Formal education at school is something else; they only learn school activities. (P5, April 2)

This response suggests the perception that formal and informal learning are not integrated. Additionally, these grandparents are aware that the learning that occurs at school is inadequate; at home children learn moral and social responsibilities that may not be taught at school.

Minzey and Le Tarte's (1979) philosophy of community education proposes that the school is the primary tool that accomplishes 'community education,' while acknowledging that the school alone is unable to educate learners. Thus, the community and the school must cooperate in order to provide holistic and integrated education for learners. The MBEC's written educational philosophy seeks to foster links between the realities of communities and the curriculum of schools. However, data collected from Komesho School and its community indicate that the livelihood of the community—particularly its agricultural priorities—are minimally linked to formal education goals. One teacher educator explained that she perceived that the learning taking place outside of school is valuable yet different from the learning that occurs in school. In the following excerpt, this educator questioned the relevance of "specific subjects" taught at school when they are measured against informal learning:

> I think the informal learning emphasises more on life skills and survival skills: Will my child be able to do 'this and that' once she is grown enough to be on her own? But when it comes to the skills that they are learning at school, there is more emphasis on specific subjects, rather than on things that they can do in ordinary life. If a child drops out of school before completing Grade 12, then can this child survive? That doesn't seem to be the concern of the schools, but I think education at home is emphasising that—practical skills that will enable the child to survive. (C2, March 20)

This educator also suggested that the learning occurring at school is disconnected from the learning taking place outside of school. She believed that "specific subjects" such as mathematics, language arts (including English, penmanship, and spelling), science, physical education, and social studies are isolated from life situations.

Later in the conversation, the respondent described taking her children to their rural home, where they work on mahango crops:

> Right now we live in town, but we do have a field that we work on in the rural areas. I don't want my children to grow up not knowing where this mahango is coming from, how they can actually grow mahango. . . . I think this also facilitates what they learn at school. They will no longer talk in terms of "Oh, apparently, mahango grows in the fields, and we don't really have an idea of how it grows." . . . Eventually they will be able to participate. For my younger daughter I have a hoe for her. . . . It is this experience I want them to get because eventually they should be able to survive on their own. (C2, March 20)

At Komesho School, Grade 5 students set up a small school crop and planted mahango and maize. The supervising teacher explained that the students brought seeds and hoes from home. Throughout the school week students tended the crops and learned agricultural skills. This 'school farm' initiative is one example of how Komesho attempts to integrate the learning that occurs naturally outside of school with the learning that occurs at school.

One Komesho parent/guardian described how the learning that takes place at home is different from the learning that takes place at school:

> At school it is the teacher's duty and also the child's duty—the child knows, I'm going to school, and I have to learn; and the teacher, it's his or her duty to give the child her subjects. At home, I think that it's not like at school. I see that it's not my responsibility to ask the child, "What have you learned?" or to keep my time to that child if I am having some kind of things to do. But sometimes I just do it. Maybe one day if I see the child with a book, "Oh, what did you learn today?" (P4, March 18)

Although this parent was willing to ask her child "What did you learn?" she viewed the teachers as responsible for "giving the child her subjects."

The MBEC (1993) states that "educated parents can help their children with their lessons and encourage them to continue their learning after school hours" (p. 97). A definition of *educated parents* is not explicit, but this statement and additional reports indicate the Ministry's perception that those parents/guardians with a higher level of formal education are less likely to be disconnected from their children's formal education. Despite the Ministry's current efforts to provide adult education, the situation remains that many parents/guardians in the Ovambo region were denied the opportunity to attain high levels of formal education during Namibia's apartheid era.

A Komesho teacher explained how parents/guardians are responsible for their children's development. Parents/guardians must "take care of their child, teach manners, how to wash themselves, and instruct the child how to behave in the community." The Namibian Minister of Basic Education and

Culture, at an anniversary of Swakopmund Secondary School on April 4, 1997, stated that "parents play an important role in instilling discipline and good manners in their children. . . . Schools and teachers should positively reinforce good behaviour" (Kakonda, p. 4). This statement recognises the disciplinary role that both teachers and parents play, but moves beyond this socialisation role to encourage parental participation in curricular, evaluatory, and administrative activities. If educators place limits on parents' educational roles and if parents and the community are not encouraged to interact with all spheres of formal schooling, discontinuity between formal and informal education will persist.

One father whose daughter attends Komesho School responded to the question, "Is the learning that takes place at home valuable?" This father responded succinctly: "The one that is valuable is at school." He went on to explain the difference between learning that takes place at home and learning that occurs at school: "At school, children are taught writing, reading, and many subjects. At home, children are only taught this sweeping the house, the washing, the cooking; these are not taught at school" (P2, March 19).

One teacher acknowledged the educational responsibility of parents/guardians:

> So [parents/guardians] have to teach them a lot of things. . . . They are the ones who have to see that the child has the chance to get educated. They have to participate, to educate the child because the teachers just have the children for a short time. (T3, March 11)

The majority of teachers at Komesho expressed the opinion that parents/guardians have an important role—to 'teach' their children at home. One teacher explained: "If the parents come [to school], then we will tell him or her the problems of her kid; you will tell him or her to teach the child at home. The parent can assist her at home" (T4, March 4). Another teacher stated: "What we really focus on is what parents can do. Parents are able to educate their children at home how to read and write in their language" (P3, March 15).

Teachers also encourage parents/guardians at parents' meetings to take an interest in their children's academic work. A Grade 5 teacher stated: "Not all Grade 2 learners read Oshykwanyama—but this is the responsibility of the community" (T6, March 14). Overall, parents/guardians' efforts to continue learning processes at home are supported by teachers.

In *Inadequacy of Schoolhouse Education*, Kerensky's (1975) perspective parallels one teacher's admission that learners are in school for a "short time." Kerensky states that the school alone is unable to educate learners completely:

> Even though we know that it is the child's whole environment that educates, that education takes place as a result of the interaction between the individual and the totality of his environment—we still keep trying to make the school the complete educational instrument. We continue to claim too much for what we can do in the school building from nine o'clock in the morning to three o'clock in the afternoon. (p. 26)

In an analysis of six case studies of community schooling in the Third World, Sinclair and Lillis (1980) identify objectives of such programmes, which include creating a positive motivation toward rural life and developing character qualities such as perseverance, self-reliance, and cooperation. These community schooling goals correspond with the participants' descriptions of learning that takes place outside of planned school settings. However, the majority of participants disconnected informal and formal learning goals.

In a post-apartheid society, NIED and the MBEC faces the immense challenge of fostering a sense of respect for others, their cultures, and religious beliefs (MBEC, 1996). while at the same time seeking national unity. In an article, "Conflicting Ideologies: Whose Curriculum?" Swarts (1996) notes the internal and external forces that are shaping Namibia's curriculum: Namibia is in a dichotomous position, between the African rural world and the Western industrial world. The intention of the curriculum guide is to value and affirm what is positive in 'both worlds' so that young people are not alienated from their roots and the land (1996).

Swarts also adds that Namibians must question, "Does African automatically mean of lower standard?" Conscientising efforts must reach communities in northern Namibia in order to create an education system that values the experiences of learners in their rural environments (Reform, 1995).

The majority of participants expressed a degree of trust for educators who are seen to be delivering an approved curriculum. I asked a family if they desire more involvement in and input into Komesho School. The child's parents/guardians replied:

> We are appreciative and happy with what we are doing at the moment. If the teachers have any suggestions to add about the school work, that is okay. Even if the teachers have changes to make, we will just accept it. (P5, April 2)

Likewise, a parent/guardian replied that she is satisfied with her current level of communication with Komesho School:

> I appreciate what the teachers are doing right now. But if they need to make a change, it is acceptable. It depends on how the teachers are feeling, if they see the need for changes that should be made at school, I can accept that. (P3, April 2)

A third parent/guardian implied that it is predominantly teachers who are able to make decisions about children's education. He responded to the question, "Do you think there are enough parents' meetings, or would you like to see more?"

> It just depends on the teachers. Since the teachers are the decision makers, if they think the meetings are enough, that is fine. If they are not calling a meeting, maybe there is no problem. (P2, March 19)

Overall, the data did not reveal that community members question curricular decisions. Moreover, the majority of Komesho parents with whom I spoke did not speak specifically about curriculum content. These two observations are not disconnected; without curricular knowledge, it is difficult for parents to question the curriculum. With the exception of teachers, the participants did not verbalise an intimate understanding of the curriculum. For example, I asked one parent/guardian if she believed that the school curriculum is important to her children's future.

> Well, I think all the subjects are relevant, because, yes, it is relevant, especially for these small grades. . . . They learn everything, they have to know everything. From the beginning the child has to know this and this. (P4, March 18)

The majority of parents/guardians referred to the curriculum and school subjects in general or vague terms. This data reveals a discrepancy between the MBEC's (1993) vision for "communities to monitor the education of their children" (p. 180) and the community's actual monitoring role. A level of curricular understanding would facilitate parents' access to academic and curricular monitoring. Parents/guardians' lack of knowledge of curricula may be contributing to the disconnection between formal and informal learning.

Collaboration

The majority of participants agreed that collaboration between the community and the school is a positive step toward improved quality of education. However, respondents who are educators pointed out that in order for the community to participate in curricular responsibilities, community members must understand the academic content. A teacher educator explained her belief that parents/guardians should have a solid understanding of the aims and the content in the curriculum:

> When the child comes to you with a task, at least you must know that this task is one of the tasks in the curriculum. But now you are just helping. . . . We have a lot of things going in wrong directions because parents are not involved in the curriculum. (C3, March 20)

This teacher educator added that parents/guardians should have the opportunity to alter and contribute to the present MBEC curriculum. She stated that a person's formal education or level of English is incidental; all community members are able to contribute to curricular decisions. This educator responded to the question, "Whose responsibility is it to educate children?"

> That is a collaboration between the community, any adult, any child. . . . It is a collaboration between the community, the school institutions, the politicians. . . . This is a joint venture—anyone who is knowledgeable and has got a certain skill. (C3, March 20)

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD; 1975) highlights the importance of collaboration. They argue that although there are contrasting ideas on the role that the school should play in relation to the community, there is an agreement that "schools are not doing what they should be doing, communities are not what they once were, and closer relations would go some way to improving two unsatisfactory situations" (p. 49). This observation corresponds to the situation in northern Namibia, where, prior to formal schooling, the community was responsible for educating children. Yet today the belief that academic training is superior to alternate training persists, and resource within the community may not be appropriately utilised (Lillis, 1985, p. 15).

The MBEC (1993) appears to support an expansive concept of collaboration where the responsibility for education is shared widely. Yet the MBEC is less willing to involve community members who have not received high levels of formal education. Recently, a Namibian curriculum guide for a common 10-year basic education has been developed through a process of consultation. Those who developed the curriculum, "the panels, committees and working groups, consist of teachers, teacher educators, university lecturers, and other knowledgeable persons in the respective subject areas" (Swarts, 1996, p. 26). Swarts argues that this system has brought "curriculum development closer to the grassroots" (1996, p.26) but raises the concern that members may not have received adequate training. With an emphasis on involving participants who have high formal education credentials and training, many parents will not be involved in collaborative efforts.

The collaboration that currently exists at Komesho School among the Primary Health Care Programme, teachers, parents/guardians, the MBEC, and NIED reflects the potential that exists in employing available resources in a community. These data suggest that the quality and relevance of primary education will be strengthened if collaboration moves toward broader and more inclusive participation.

CHAPTER SIX

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND ITS COMMUNITY

Chapter Six describes and explains the range of linkages that exist between Komesho School and its surrounding community within the framework of critical pedagogy and community education literature. In order to accomplish this, this chapter responds to the following questions: How is the community involved in the school's curricula? How does communication between the school and community occur? What is the relationship between Komesho School and its neighbouring institute, Ongwediva College of Education? How is the community involved in a broad range of educational decisions? Finally, what forces encourage or impede school-community linkages?

The Community's Curricular Involvement

Komesho teachers recognise that members of their community hold valuable skills and knowledge that can be imparted to learners. Thus, there have been occasions when teachers invite guest 'instructors' who are not certified teachers. For example a teacher at Komesho School explained that in a previous year she invited an elder to tell traditional stories in her class. A second example is a pastor's visit to a morning assembly. A teacher explained, "[The pastor] is uninvited, but he is welcomed, and he is encouraged to come again" (T4, March 4). Third, the Primary Health Care Teams visit Komesho School and educate students on pertinent health topics such as AIDS, malaria, and nutrition.

Although there are only isolated incidents where community members visit Komesho as guest speakers or teachers, the respondents did not express strong opposition to this initiative." For example, a teacher educator explained:

> Parents, whether they are educated or not, can be encouraged once in a while to deliver speeches to these children. In terms of teaching them the traditions, most of the people who can do that are the parents, the uneducated parents, for that matter, because they seem to know more about tradition. This should be a part of the school curriculum. (C2, April 21)

One grandmother responded to the question, " Do you believe it is possible for community members to come to the school to contribute to teaching?" "We cannot do that, because the teachers are the ones who are ahead of us. We have never done that; maybe what they have at schools is enough" (P3, March 4). Yet, after learning about a teacher's plan to invite a brick mason (to instruct at Komesho), she replied positively and stated that brickmaking is a valuable skill for students to learn. The comment that "teachers are the ones who are ahead of us" suggests a belief that knowledge gained through formal education is superior to other forms of knowledge. Critical pedagogy seeks to question and ultimately eradicate the supremacy placed on certain forms of knowledge and 'commonly accepted' understandings (Kellner, 1990).

Educators must critically examine the extent to which knowledge obtained through lived experiences rather than formal education is recognised and rewarded. Namibia's MBEC has to a significant degree succeeded in communicating and receiving this community's support for formal education. Yet, within Namibia's goals to compete with international education standards and international markets, there is a potential consequence of marginalising those with less schooling and rewarding those with high levels of education.

Teachers and parents/guardians recognise hindrances that impede community members from sharing their knowledge and skills at school. One respondent pointed out: "How could you ask parents/guardians to come in when they have breads and cakes to sell that day or fields to work in? They would expect some finances if they were to come in" (T6, April 2).

Teachers at Komesho explained that if, for example, a singer from the community was invited into the school, she would expect payment. Even if she did not ask for money, the school would "feel guilty" because she had missed a day's work to come to a school. Also, she would need transport, such as a taxi, which also costs money. One educator highlighted the issue of financial constraints:

> I think egocentrism has gone with most of us; people are selfish. . . . If woodworking is my source of income, why should I go and sell it free of charge? (C3, March 20)

Parents/guardians and teachers also acknowledged that a person's level of education and literacy can impede involvement in the curriculum. I asked a parent/guardian who works at a human rights centre if she thought it is possible for parents/guardians to help teach at Komesho in an area in which they are skilled. She believed this is feasible; however, she added, "our people and our community, we are very far from education; . . . many of our people are illiterate."

Critical theory questions 'legitimate knowledge'—accepted knowledge that is valued above other types of knowledge. Critical theorists highlight the fact that knowledge created and taught within the formal school setting is often more acceptable than knowledge gained elsewhere—it has become approved and rewarded by society. Formal education therefore holds the potential indirectly to devalue 'traditional' knowledge and skills.

Teachers and community participants also stressed that due to working commitments, especially in subsistence farming, time is a scarce commodity. Such work commitments must be viewed within the context of urban migration patterns, which include the migration of many able-bodied parents who previously were farmers. Thus, people's movement towards towns and cities affects the current Komesho School-community relationships. A teacher at Komesho explained why parents/guardians are too busy to come in as guest instructors:

> At this time parents are so busy in the fields; they cannot come in. During other seasons they are not so busy. I think its just, we have not planned for [parents to come to the school]. But at this time, really, it's very hard; it's not easy for them to come in. (T3, March 15)

Work commitments outside of subsistence farming also prevent community visits to schools. Teachers at Komesho pointed out that, for example, police officers were unable to come to speak in classes about crime prevention and community safety because of demanding responsibilities in their districts."

One teacher acknowledged that obstacles hinder community members' teaching involvement. She concluded:

> This is a primary school. With our small knowledge that we have we could satisfy the children because even if they are making something with the clay, you could just teach them. But when it comes to the older learners, for example, Grade 5, I plan to call the parents [to teach brickmaking]. (T3, March 15)

Some aspects of the school curriculum allow for and encourage community involvement. For example, the Grade 4 social studies text encourages students to invite elders to their class, to find out about services in their community, to learn about a 'development project' in their community. This curricular content for community participation exemplifies the MBEC position that the school plays an important role in the community, and the community that it operates within has important effects on the school (Enviroteach, 1995). However, NIED and the MBEC must face the challenge of including the community in curricular decisions as well as curricular activities.

Communication Between the School and the Community

Komesho parents/guardians, teachers, and the MBEC emphasise the need for open communication between schools and communities.[vii] In this case-study community, communication between parents/guardians and teachers most often occurs face to face. Written communication occurs less often due to the importance of oral tradition and due to the current resources available. Komesho School, like the majority of primary schools in northern Namibia, does not have a photocopier, extra funds for paper, or a school secretary; therefore, school newsletters are sent home only for crucial announcements.[viii] The principal at Komesho School explained that newsletters are photocopied at Ongwediva College. The participants pointed out that written communication could occur without a photocopier. One teacher educator stated: "I don't think schools actually need photocopier machines to inform, to communicate with the parents. Something can be hand written; we don't need something that might be costly to the school (C2, March 20).

Teachers at Komesho believe that a school telephone would facilitate communication between the school and the community. The majority of parents/guardians do not have phones, and teachers pointed out that the community could benefit from a phone in order to call community resources such as a hospital in the case of an emergency (T3, March 11). Thus, a telephone would potentially draw parents/guardians into the school to make use of the school's phone. Komesho School's currently available resources do not currently permit a telephone service. The principal pointed out how the school communicates to parents/guardians when learners are absent:

> If a learner is absent for one or two days, the teacher will not usually make inquiries. If a child is absent for one week, efforts will be made to find out why the child is absent. The exception is during the current rainy season, when some children will be away for more than one week—even for a month. (T1, March 12)

In situations when biological parents are 'migrant workers' (for example, employed in Windhoek, about 800 kilometres from Ondangua) these parents may not hold strong communication ties with their children's school. The queries of one father, a 'migrant worker,' suggested a lack of communication with Komesho School:

> What will the teachers do if the children are sick? Will they take the child to the hospital or will they take her home? . . . Is it possible for us to go to school, even if we are not invited? . . . During what time am I free to come there, even if they are busy with lessons or anytime? . . . When I come [to visit the school] do I just go straight to the class where my child is? (P2, March 19)

Community members who do not attend parents' meetings or do not have children attending the school are free to visit the school if concerns arise. For example, one leader of the elder's council visited the school and questioned the principal and teachers on school policies:

> What policies does Komesho have for students who did not have money to pay their fees? . . . Do you send children away if they cannot pay school fees? . . . What if the child does not have a uniform—will he be sent away?

The leader spent the morning at the school and various classes as teachers and the principal thoroughly answered his questions. The elder's initiative and action is significant; as a respected representative of one of the four villages served by the school, this elder was willing to come to the school grounds to challenge school decisions that directly affect the educational welfare of his village's children. Teachers reiterated that the school's gates are not closed to parents/guardians or any visitors and this elder demonstrated his willingness to investigate and question several crucial issues such as school fees, uniform rules, and attendance policies.

The majority of participants in the vicinity of Komesho reported that they would visit the school if a difficulty or problem arose.[ix] One parent/guardian explained: "I didn't visit the school for the interest of seeing and looking what my kid is doing in the class. It's only, sometimes I'm having a problem or maybe I have to go and pay the school fees" (P4, March 18). This parent further explained a specific situation where her son was disturbed and beaten by older learners. After discussing this problem with the teachers, the incident was resolved and did not reoccur.

Another parent/guardian expressed her freedom to visit the school: "If I come across any problem, I can just go" (P3, April 2). A teacher confirmed that this particular parent/guardian had come to the school with concerns about the low academic performance of her grandson. In this situation the grandparent visited the school of her own volition.

In addition, teachers will request to see a parent/guardian whose child faces difficulties at school. For instance, a teacher will arrange to communicate with a parent/guardian whose child is not mastering the content required to pass his grade.

If a teacher is concerned about a child's health and physical well-being, her parents/guardians will be contacted:

> If the teachers give a child food, they have to call the parents and tell them that "the child was feeling sleepy or had stomach pains, and we realised that she was hungry," . . . and the parents just take it that it is true. (T3, March 15)

A junior primary teacher further described the measures followed for a child who is not physically well. In response to the question, "Can you call the Ministry of Social Services?" this teacher replied, "There are Social workers, but we don't invite them. Sometimes they just come and interview the kids at their house, but they are not here at school" (T7, March 15).

Komesho teachers pointed out that the school's invitations to the community for parents' meetings and school visits receive a good response. I asked one teacher: "When parents/guardians are invited to see their children's teachers and school work each year, how many come?" She responded: "They are really interested in that invitation; 90% come'" (T4, March 24). Additional teachers confirmed the positive response that the school receives, although some stated that less than 90% of the parents come."

The participants explained that visitors are welcome to the school at any time; the majority of parents/guardians are aware of this school policy. Yet, despite this ongoing 'open invitation,' the number of parents/guardians who take the initiative to come to Komesho uninvited is small. A parent responded to the query, "Do you visit the school to look at the children's books?"

> The parents are free to visit the school at any time. I was once called to the school to see and look at how the children are doing, and I went. But I have never taken the decision on my own to investigate the children's work at school. (P1, Feb. 26)

Another parent/guardian responded to the question, "Are you able to visit the school to look at your son's work?" "I am able to go, but really, honestly speaking, I didn't try it" (P4, March 18).

One grandparent was an exception because she was willing to visit the school in the absence of an invitation or a parents' meeting. "Even though there is no meeting, sometimes I am willing to go [to Komesho] to at least explain the problem" (P5 April 2). The fact that this parent/guardian had visited the school was confirmed by the son's teacher.

A teacher replied to the query, "On average, how many parents/guardians visit in a month?"

> Even one or two; it depends how the parents relate with the kids' work. . . . Some parents, they are worried and then they come to school—but not many. You can see even two parents in one month or two months, but some come only when they are invited. (T4, March 4)

In January 1997 teachers stated that parents/guardians would be invited to Komesho School in March 1997 to see their children's teachers. However, the first term (January to April) passed without an extended invitation to parents/guardians. One teacher explained that schools are required to invite parents/guardians at least once a year; "but they are free to come every time they want to come" (T4, March 4). This teacher responded to the question, "How often do parents visit, in addition to once a year?" "Some come with excuses. They'll say 'I'm just asking about my kid's work,' or they'll say their kid is not doing their work completely; then they come to ask the teacher." However, during the first term the researcher did not observe parents/guardians visiting the school. Some teachers confirmed that their learners' parents/guardians had not visited during the four-month term.

The community did not attend cultural and sporting events that occurred at the school during its first term of 1997. For example, in celebration of Namibia's Independence Day, learners performed dances and songs for the school. Earlier in the term a district track-and-field event took place where other schools participated. Teachers reiterated that the obstacles of distance, time, and prior work commitments hinder the community's attendance.

A Komesho teacher who is a member of the school board stated that it is the duty of the board members to visit the school: "[They] will sit at the back of one of the classes and observe what the teacher is teaching. Or they will see the exercises of the children [to ascertain] how are they progressing in their education" (T5, Feb. 25). However, during the first term the researcher did not observe any school board visits.

An educator who works at Ongwediva's Educational Centre described how open communication between the school and the community is a prerequisite to the community's involvement in the school:

> The ways of involvement will only start if there is communication between the school and communities. . . . Schools have to try by all means to inform the parents of what is going on at the school. And then the community itself sometimes will come up to ask [questions] because now they know that the management is willing to give information. . . . Right from the beginning transparency might be a key to successful communication between the school and parents. (C1, Feb. 18)

A teacher educator believed that both the school and the parents/guardians must strive to improve communication between themselves. She stated:

> if you have an idea as a parent and if you are not very sure that the school is going to accept it, then it is very hard for you to

> say, "Let's do this." . . . And if there is no meeting point where parents can meet and talk, then it is very difficult for an individual person to suggest what a certain school should do. . . . The school should indicate the willingness to cooperate with the parents and to get the parents involved. If [schools] can give an open hand to members of the community to get involved, I think [the community] will get involved. (C2, April 21)

This teacher educator responded to the question: "Why doesn't the community become more involved in schools?" "I think this really depends on how someone is managing the school and what he wants to see the school doing and how he sees the involvement of the community" (C2, April 21). This response essentially placed the onus to initiate community participation on school management.[xi]

Another teacher educator proposed that schools take a stronger initiative to invite parents/guardians and the community to school events. She believed that for sports and cultural events, or if students are given certificates at the end of the year, parents/guardians should be encouraged to come to the school (C3, April 4).

Komesho's Relationship With OCE

Ongwediva College of Education (OCE) and Komesho School have developed links through the College's School-Based Studies (SBS) programme. The close proximity between the two institutions facilitates this relationship.

A group of student teachers teach at Komesho for several weeks during their SBS. Komesho teachers (support teachers) receive a workshop led by OCE educators prior to SBS in order to explain the programme's goals. The Basic Education Teaching Diploma (BETD) goals include:

- to develop the ability to participate actively in collaborative decision making;
- to develop social responsibility towards learners, colleagues, the community, and the nation as a whole;
- to enable the teacher to manage natural resources sustainably in the school and community;
- to prepare the teacher to strengthen the partnership between school and community. (MBEC, 1993, p. 82)

The MBEC aims to involve the support schools in the BETD programme. For example, support teachers attend a workshop conducted by OCE prior to the School-Based Studies. This professional development workshop prepares support teachers for their supervisory roles and outlines the goals and philosophy of the BETD. OCE, through its School-Based Studies, seeks to upgrade the support teachers, who can then assist the student teachers in their pedagogy. Hence, the potential for a mutually rewarding relationship exists between OCE and Komesho School.

Moreover, the SBS programme sees a partnership school such as Komesho as its *own community*—a "whole-school concept." A National Institute of Educational Development (NIED) director commented at a BETD Appraisal Workshop held in October 1995 on this whole-school concept: Instead of targeting a few support teachers in several schools, the SBS programme targets the whole school support to establish strong partnership between the school and the College (SBS, 1996). This statement also suggests that NIED sees the value in strengthening links between the college and support schools.

During SBS, student teachers' responsibilities include child studies (observing children at school and in their home environment); arranging parent meetings; and involving teachers, learners, and parents/guardians in different community activities outside school (*SBS,* 1996). Such activities integrate the student teacher into the lives of Komesho and its surrounding community.

One teacher at Komesho explained the reciprocal relationship that is formed between student teachers and support teachers:

> We help each other. If they find something that I can do in a better way, the students are free to tell me. If I want her to improve her teaching, I have to also tell her. I am free to ask her a question; she or he is also free to ask me a question. (T7, April 2)

Komesho School borders Ongwediva College of Education, yet they are rarely linked beyond the SBS programme. The researcher observed only isolated instances when OCE interacted with the school. For example, a new OCE primary education lecturer visited Komesho School to observe the curriculum. In 1996 the Teachers' Resource Centre, located on the periphery of OCE, requested assistance from Komesho School on the construction of their buildings. Komesho students collected bottles, and the glass was crushed and painted onto the exterior of the building.

A Komesho teacher responded to the question, "Apart from the SBS, do the student teachers come to the school?"

> No, I don't think [student teachers] will come, but if they need something they will come here. For example, if [student teachers] need a textbook for natural science, they will come here and interview the teacher about the subject lessons so that they can do their assignment. (T6, April 10)

The majority of OCE educators and student teachers explained that the demands of the OCE programme limit additional involvement in schools.

However, mutual benefits would result from increased interaction between OCE student teachers and Komesho School.

The Community's Involvement in School Decisions

Educators such as Fatini (cited in Kaplan, 1978) point out that parents are more likely to support and agree with policies that are created through parental consultation. Moreover, if parents and the community are denied a voice in educational decision-making processes, the end result is a formal education system that is less relevant and more distanced from the lives of a community. The following account examines the extent to which educational decisions at Komesho School were a collaborative effort among educational stakeholders such as the MBEC, the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), teachers, parents, and other community members. Also, this section highlights the educational realms where decisions appear to be taken without community input.

Komesho parents/guardians saw the importance of collaborating with educators in order to form *school policies*. One parent explained that

> if the parents don't understand the rules or what is going on at the school, then they make a parent meeting with teachers and discuss the whole issue, that no, if we will go like this, we don't like it. (P4, March 18)

A specific incident at Komesho School illustrates the negative consequences that can result when the community is not involved in creating a school policy. During the first term of 1997, parents/guardians expressed their disagreement with a recently enforced 'locked-gate' policy that was formed without their input. Teachers had been concerned about the number of late-coming students who were absent for the morning assembly and the first class. The principal and teachers discussed the situation and agreed that this problem warranted a drastic measure. The learners were consequently informed that after 8:00 a.m., the school entrance gate would be locked. Late students were required to wait outside the locked gate until a designated teacher recorded names before allowing the learners to enter. However, once this rule was enforced, some late-coming learners literally ran away from the school rather than waiting for the gate to be unlocked. Some community members were uninformed about the new policy; they believed that late students were being turned away from school:

> We are having a problem of those kids that always come late, but it's only because of rain. We had a very hard rain, and you can't turn the child back . . . It's very dangerous for some of them. . . . If we parents see that a child is always at the gate, or he doesn't attend his classes every day because the child is always late, then we parents go to the school, to the teachers, and discuss the issue that, no, you have to do different things. (P4, March 18)

This parent/guardian further suggested that the school's starting time should be changed.

A leader of the elders' council came to visit the Komesho School in order to question the principal about this locked-gate policy. Although he did not currently have children enrolled at the school, he was concerned that children were being turned away from classes (Feb. 11). A discussion unfolded between the teachers, principal, and council leader; confusion and disagreement arose because the community had not been informed or invited to contribute towards the new policy.

Input into decision-making processes was at times interpreted by parents/guardians to equate to participation on the school board. One father responded to the question, "Have you been able to be a part of the decision-making processes at Komesho School?"

> No, I have never taken that responsibility. . . . If I happened to be chosen by other parents, that would be fine, I could sit on the school board. But it's just that I cannot be on the school board because I have not been chosen. (P2, March 19)

The response suggests that this father believed that parents/guardians who are elected to the school board are involved in school decisions, whereas as unelected parents/guardians are not involved in school decisions.

Parents/guardians, the MBEC, and teachers play a part in academic-promotion decisions for Komesho students. Each year the MBEC sends circulars that state that all the learners in a designated grade must not repeat. The MBEC also sets regulations for older learners; for example, all learners who are 15 and in Grade 4 must progress to Grade 5. Despite the Ministry's annual circulars, a teacher at Komesho School noted:

> Some parents, if they know that their child is not reading, they will come and talk to the teachers, that "No, my child can't go forward; . . . she must repeat that grade." It also happened this year, there was a parent who came to tell the teacher for her learner to go back to Grade 2 because she is not reading. (T3, March 11)

Parents/guardians, teachers, and the MBEC appear to hold the learner's educational interests at the centre of their grade-promotion policies. Komesho teachers assess students' performances, advise parents, and accept the parents' input on their child's promotion.[xii]

The Komesho School Board

The MBEC states that primary school boards will be composed of five parents/guardians and five teachers who are 'democratically elected'. Parent/guardian school board representatives are elected by the parents/guardians at a parents' meetings; those parents/guardians who are unable to attend the meeting may send a representative who will vote for them. Teacher representatives are elected by Komesho teachers during a staff meeting. The parents/guardians who sit on the school board have significant responsibilities; their overall mandate is to represent the school's parents.

Parents/guardians are not required to hold a particular profession or level of education in order to be elected to the Komesho School Board. Parents/guardians on the newly elected school board at Komesho School include the education chief of payroll, who holds either a diploma or a certificate; a former teacher who was demoted due to lack of qualifications; a hospital clerk who has not attended tertiary education; a farmer who holds a Grade 8/9 education; and a pastor. During a parents' meeting parents/guardians are voted in, according to their interest and commitment to the following responsibilities:

1. to hold their elected position for five years;
2. to draft proposals for school expenditures and fund raising, subject to approval at parents' meeting;
3. to look into the practical needs of the school;
4. to ensure that the school's and teachers' educational standards meet those of the MBEC;
5. to give input on new teaching staff;
6. to grant permission for teachers' further studies; and
7. to meet with the district inspector. (T5, Feb. 25)

An incident of theft exemplifies the decision-making power of the Komesho School Board. A security guard admitted that he had stolen the school's garden net; the school board took control of the situation and solved the issue:

> The decision that is made by the school board is that he should repay the [school's garden] net and continue with his work; not to chase him away. The school board wrote a letter to the Ministry to inform the Ministry what is their decision about this issue. . . . And here the school board has the power and plays the important role in this issue. (T5, Feb. 25)

A Komesho School Board member described the relationship between the parents/guardians and the school board's involvement in school decisions:

> [The school board] drafts the rules of the school before the parents' meeting so that a final decision can be taken [at the meeting]. The parents will come and make a decision that these rules are suitable for our school, or this is not good for that learner. They can give us other suggestions. [The school board] also makes a draft about raising school funds, so they can bring this matter to the parent's meeting. The final decision will be taken at the parents' meeting. (T5, Feb. 25)

The description of school board responsibilities aims for collaboration with the community. However, those who do not attend parents' meetings will possibly remain outside of the school's decision-making processes. Those who attend parents' meetings are advising and contributing suggestions to rules already formed by the board; hence, parents/guardians are not involved in all decision-making stages.

Government policies for hiring and placing teachers are currently changing. In the past the local school board had full hiring responsibility. One teacher explained: "We have to know who will teach here—what is his behaviour and his confidence in teaching. It is only last year the government played a role in recruiting the teachers for the different schools" (T5).

A Komesho school board member stated: "Most of the school matters are controlled by the school board" (T5, Feb. 25). Yet an analysis of the responsibilities of the school board reveals that their decision-making role is limited to specific educational domains. Issues in which the school board has decision-making powers include "disciplinary action concerning unprofessional conduct of teachers; fund-raising for the school fund; authorisation of school fund expenditure; compilation and interpretation of school rules; and development of extramural activities" (MBEC, 1990, p. 11).

The school board holds a measure of financial and administrative decision-making power; however, its input appears to be absent in several foundational realms. For example, local school boards do not contribute to educational goals and objectives, curricula development, academic standards, and alternate educational initiatives and programmes such as Distance Education or Adult Literacy. The Ministry's description of school boards' decision-making powers suggests that foundational educational decisions are formed outside of the local community (MBEC, 1990). In the absence of decentralisation, the formal education system has the potential to impede democracy by denying the contributions of individuals in rural communities. Moreover, if key educational decisions are made only within the MBEC and the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), educational goals become detached from the priorities and long-term goals of rural communities.

Nyambe (1996), in his analysis of Namibia's BETD programme, notes a lack of genuine decentralised participation. When major professional decisions are centralised at NIED, minor forms of "participation" are mere tokenisms which serve to "silence" or manipulate those who remain outside of recognised educational positions. "Scholars in the critical tradition have long indicated that while far from redistribution of power, participation within the dominant ideology has largely been used as an effective instrument of power and control" (Arnstein et al.; as cited in Nyambe, 1996, p. 103).

Parents' Meetings

Komesho parents' meetings are perceived as an opportunity for the community to reach conclusions on school issues. In one interview two teachers described the dynamics of a parents' meeting:

> Mrs. H: When we call a parent's meeting we can give [the parents] only the topic, and they have to discuss that topic in detail. . . . They make their own decisions about the school. For example, . . . we asked them if it is possible to increase, to rise up the school fund. . . . When I came to start teaching at Komesho School they were paying N$3.00. . . . We know the need of the school and we asked them if it possible to raise the fee to N$5.00, and they agreed.
>
> Mrs. K: We just gave them the hint, we have a lack of materials, also other things. Then we go through all together, as teachers and the community, and then they decide what they think is good for them, what they think they can afford. Then we decide all together.

Although these teachers explained that parents/guardians make decisions at parents meetings, it was the teachers who "hinted" and "asked" if school fees could be increased. In essence, parents/guardians agreed to a fee increase proposed by the school.

The concept of decision making can be viewed in varying increasing levels including *consultative, advisory, shared control,* and *community control* (Fatini, 1975; as cited in Kaplan, 1978, p. 15). The dynamics of these parents' meetings suggest that parents/guardians may hold a consultative role (where educators confer with parents) and an advisory role (where the 'professional' seeks the advice of parents/guardians, but the final decision rests with the educator). *Shared control* would mean that educators and the community had an equal voice in planning processes.

A grandparent responded to the question, "Do you feel that you understand the rules and policies at Komesho School?" She replied: "We are used to being told about the rules of the school at the parents' meeting" (P5, April 2). Such a response suggests that this parent/guardian did not see that she was involved in the decision-making process to the same degree that teachers reported. However, this parent/guardian later stated:

> We do make decisions [at the parents' meeting]. . . . The parents came together to discuss and came to the decision that each house should contribute at least N$60.00 so that they can buy zinc for the [Grade 5] classroom. (P5, April 2)

The new grade five classroom was constructed with corrugated iron sheets (or "zinc") and at the time of the research was unfinished but being used as a classroom.

It was difficult for the researcher to determine the degree to which parents/guardians were participating in decision-making processes due to a four-month research constraint, a lack of cultural insight, and the absence of first-hand observations. A parents' meeting did not occur during the first term; therefore, the researcher was unable to observe Komesho School's decision-making process.

If for some reason a parent/guardians is unable to attend a meeting, she/he will send a representative (P1, April 2). If a parent/guardian does not send someone to represent and report back to them, valuable information is not communicated. When I asked one teacher, "How can the relationship between the school and community be strengthened?" she explained: "There is no other way that they can communicate [apart from parents' meetings]. [The teachers] cannot say they are going to the village; it would be difficult" (T2, Feb. 26). This response implies that the initiative for communication largely rests with the parents/guardians, who are expected to attend parents' meetings.

Typically, Komesho School holds a parents' meeting one to three times in a school year. However, if issues or requests for a meeting do not arise, a term will pass without a meeting. For instance, teachers and the principal explained that during the first term of 1997 there had been no occasion to hold a meeting. Parents/guardians had varying reactions to the absence of a parents' meeting in the first term. One grandparent stated:

> I suggest that there should be at least two or three meetings each year. Once a year is not enough. . . . I have the case of one [grand]child who is also attending Komesho School, but sometimes she dodges the classes. I want to go and tell the teacher that whenever this child is not in school, they have to inform me that this child is absent on this date. (P5, April 2)

Another parent/guardian was not concerned that there had not been a meeting that term. She stated that it was at the teachers' discretion to decide whether or not any pertinent issues warranted a parents' meeting. A discrepancy existed between the majority of parents/guardians, who believed that the school was responsible for calling parents' meetings, and the teachers, who stated that parents also had the responsibility to call a meeting if critical issues arose.

Forces That Impact School-Community Relationships

Time and Employment

The participants reported that the consuming responsibilities of subsistence farming impede relationships between the school and its surrounding community. A Komesho teacher stated:

> The parents are very busy during the rainy season, from December to May/June, planting their crops, so it is difficult for

> them to make it into the school. During the rainy season parents rarely come to the school, but at other times they do. (T6, April 3)

A parent/guardian who lived about 6 kilometres south of Komesho School paused from hoeing her mahango crop and explained the demands of agricultural work: "We cannot go [to Komesho School] when there is work in the fields and at home. If there is less work, then we can go" (T1, Feb. 26).

Another parent/guardian responded to the question, "Do you know of any barriers or obstacles that prevent parents from being involved in their children's school work?"

> Well, I think the only thing is time. Time is a very big problem. Yes, to me it is only time. . . . The will is there; I want to be very much involved, but really, I don't have time. And if my kids maybe didn't pass very well, I know sometimes maybe it's my failure. (P4, March 18)

The challenges of subsistence farming are compounded by drought and urban migration, which have left the community with fewer subsistence farmers.

Levels of Formal Education

The participants indicated that parents/guardians who do not have a high level of formal education can feel alienated from school activities.[xiii] For example, one parent/guardian explained in the Oshykwanyama language why it is difficult for parents to be involved in education:

> Sometimes it is difficult [to hold links with the school] because the parents do not know what the teachers do with the learners, because some parents do not have that knowledge of education. (T1, Feb. 26)

This parent/guardian's perspective resounded amongst additional participants.

However, parents' level of education is not a determining factor for parental participation on the Ovambo school board:[xiv]

> When we elect the school board we don't look for those people who are educated, no matter if he doesn't know how to read—if he is elected he must represent [parents] on the board. He or she must understand what is education. . . . [Parents] elect someone who attends the meeting, because when someone comes to the meeting it means he is understanding what is education. When you elect a person you have to see who is interested and who will work properly on that board. (T5, Feb. 25)

Moreover, school board meetings and parents' meetings are held in the Oshykwanyama language and therefore the English language is not a barrier to participation is these two domains. The use of the Oshykwanyama language is significant to parents/guardians communication and relationship with Komehso School; the majority of parents/guardians are not fluent in the English language.

An OCE educator believed that a lack of formal education and qualifications should not hinder pedagogical and curricular participation.[xv] She pointed out that before missionary schools were introduced in this country, indigenous education was "coherent and systematic." Moreover, she explained that traditional education integrated "reality in teaching":

> Skills and knowledge are [not] something that only originated from the formal [education] setting. . . . Those people were not educated, they did not know how to read. . . . I question my students in the class, "When you see learning by doing, when you see learning through rituals and ceremonies, how do you associate this now with learner-centred education?" The concept was there. (C3, March 20)

This participant further explained that grandparents without formal pedagogical training have traditionally taught children through storytelling.

Komesho teachers explained that parents/guardians' level of literacy impacts how parents/guardians will or will not be able to assist their children with academic assignments:

> As long as she knows how to read, then she encourages the kids and tells the kids what's the future if you are educated. If the parents don't know how to read and write, they cannot assist the kids. (T4, March 4)

Moreover, a Grade 5 teacher at Komesho School stated:

> If a child is coming from a house with educated people, those children perform better. Those children who come from homes where the parents are not educated, they are not the same. There is a big difference. Those [who are educated] understand about education, so they motivate their children to perform better at school. (T3, March 11)

Varied and 'contradicting' data emerged from participants' discussions about parents/guardians' level of schooling. Although some participants affirmed that "some illiterate parents are more interested in their children's education," others were equally convinced that it is only educated parents/guardians who are interested in formal schooling and understand its importance. An OCE teacher educator stated that some teachers and principals "still have the attitude of, if the parent is not educated, what kind of contribution is he or she going to make to the school? . . . This is what I see is a stumbling block" (C2, April 21).[xvi]

The MBEC (1993) holds the position that parents/guardians with higher formal education are more likely to maintain strong ties to their children's school:

> Education for all requires broadened participation in decision making. . . . As our parents themselves become better educated, they will become more active in monitoring and guiding the schools in their communities. . . . Teachers, learners, parents will necessarily become more accountable to

> the others. . . . Educated parents can help their children with their lessons and encourage them to continue their learning after school hours. Educated parents are more likely to play an active role in supporting and managing their community schools. (pp. 10, 97)

Even for those parents/guardians who are "better educated," the MBEC makes only a limited provision for their input into schools. The absence of a reference to community participation in curricula formation, educational goals, and ideology implies that foundational educational decisions are entrusted only to "trained educational professionals."

Perceptions of the Value of Schooling

The majority of teachers and educators who were interviewed for this study believed that parents/guardians who understand the value of education are more likely to be involved in their children's education. The respondents stated that when a parent/guardian holds an understanding of the merits of formal education, she is able to influence the academic performance of her child positively.

However, Komesho parents' interest in education does not necessarily correlate with their level of formal education. For example, regardless of parents/guardians' level of education, they are able to check their children's primary-level homework, attend meetings, and ensure that their children attend school. As one educator stated, "I know some parents/guardians who only know how to read and write [in Oshykwanyama], but they are very much interested in knowing how their children are performing" (C2, April 21).

Teachers and national educators can capitalise on parents/guardians' interest in education without discriminating against those who have not received the opportunity to obtain higher levels of education. That is, rather than limiting parental involvement to contributing money to build classes, agreeing to school rules, and advising for the school's small budget, parents/guardians should be given the opportunity to share responsibility for educational foundations such as educational objectives, curricula, and structural changes to schooling.

Teachers at Komesho have accepted the MBEC mandate to inform parents of "the importance of education." One teacher stated that parents' meetings are a venue where teachers emphasise this mandate. She added:

> And [parents/guardians] all know that without education, all they know will not survive. And to have a good nation, and an effective one, people must be educated—that is what we want in Namibia. Now our country is independent; we want to 'come up,' and I think all the people understand this. (T7, Feb. 18)

This statement reflects a persistent development ideology that perceives that Third World Nations are 'catching up' to 'model' First World Nations. Sach (1992), in *The Development Dictionary,* questions: "What would a completely developed world look like?"

> We don't know, but most certainly is would be both boring and fraught with danger. For development cannot be separated from the idea that all peoples of the planet are moving along one single track towards some state of maturity, exemplified by the nations 'running in front.' (p. 3)

Educators—including parents/guardians and the community—can only gain from conscientisation efforts that aim to uncover and challenge persistent 'Westernisation' and modernisation ideologies. Education stakeholders cannot afford to fail to question critically the long-term consequences of an education system's political goals, direction, and its 'hidden agenda.'

The majority of teachers at Komesho School demonstrated a commitment to teach within an educational system that is largely unquestioned. Teachers were vocal about immediate concerns for their learners but did not question or discuss the underpinning political goals and ideologies that are inherent in any given educational system. For example, lower-primary teachers at Komesho School expressed their frustration with parents/guardians who do not "take care of their children" or support schooling at the preprimary to Grade 3 level:

> Some of the parents, they have that belief that lower primary is nothing, so they didn't come to the primary, they didn't take care of the children when they are in lower primary. But when they go to the upper primary, the care changed [improved]. They have that belief that at lower primary they are doing nothing at school; it is better to stay at home and do some housework. (T8, March 24)

Lower-primary teachers pointed out that learners are absent more often during high floodwaters. During the flood season the rain waters are too high for many Grades 1 and 2 children to cross; consequently, children who must pass floodwaters en route to school remain at home.

A Komesho teacher described how parents' interest in schooling differs:

> You know that people differ. Just as they differ in size and length, they also differ in minds. Some parents, they are really interested in their kids' education. But some of them, they are not. It means that some people, they come to school and investigate their kids' work, and then they encourage them. But some, they don't have time or they don't understand what education is. (T4, March 4)

Although the data revealed that a majority of parents/guardians support formal education, there was little evidence to suggest that they question the aims, achievements, and failures of Namibia's formal education system. This community appears to have predominantly accepted the government's message that 'education (schooling) is important.' Yet, the Ministry has not encouraged communities to examine questions such as, What are the political objectives of education? How effectively do students learn in current classroom situations? What curriculum is worth learning? In addition, communities should be encouraged to challenge the MBEC's accountability on its four primary goals: access, equality, quality, and efficiency.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

The case study was carried out in recognition that rural Third World school-community relationships face problems that may include the following: Imposed 'European' schooling systems in Third World Nations tend to disconnect formal education from lived realities; trained professionals have replaced the community as the primary educating agent; communities are often not encouraged to question the curriculum, political ideologies, and 'hidden agendas' of a schooling system; and the community may have minimal input into the children's formal education.

The purpose of the study is to describe and analyse the relationships that exist between Komesho School and its surrounding community. This goal is based on an underlying premise of community education literature: Collaboration between a school and its surrounding community contributes to educational quality and relevance. The researcher described and analysed the community's degree of integration and inclusion in educational spheres with a view to strengthening school-community relationships.

The analysis process occurred throughout the case study as the researcher formulated, tested, and altered tentative conclusions. Goetz and LeCompte (1984; as cited in Merriam, 1988) note that the integration of analysis within research processes is a distinguishing feature of qualitative design. This chapter completes the analysis process, interprets the significance and meaning of the research data, and recapitulates key research findings.

Defining Community and Community Education

Preliminary research on the history of education in Namibia and a review of community education literature from 'Western nations' as well as Third World nations contributed to the researcher's definitions of *community* and *community education*.

In this study the term 'community' geographically encompasses the school and its surroundings within a radius of approximately 7 kilometres. The community includes parents/guardians, those who may or may not have children at school, those who interact with families within the school (e.g., PHC nurses), teachers, Ongwediva College of Education, the environment, and all resources that surround Komesho School. The MBEC has adopted the term community to refer essentially to all people who live within the school's catchment area and who as a result have a responsibility towards "their community school." In light of the MBEC's concept of the community and the school, this case-study community exists primarily in relation to Komesho School rather than independent of the school. That is, prior to the school's establishment, the case-study community would have been described in terms of families, clans, and villages.

The majority of participants perceived the community as the people who interact with each other, the resources, and the natural environment in their surrounding area. Linkages that exist among the community are strengthened through a common language, culture, and history. Moreover, the community's commitment to subsistence farming is a common thread that weaves together many diverse people; teachers and other community members who hold a position outside of farming also hold strong agricultural links. Additionally, the participants emphasised their shared educational aspirations for their children. That is, the importance of training and educating children is a cohesive, integral element within the community.

Current health care initiatives exemplify the utilisation of community resources and the school is a key locality where health services are provided. Primary health care nurses facilitate the delivery of health care which directly reaches Komesho children and through the children extends to reach parents/guardians. Additionally, the Primary Health Care Program illustrates the linkages between Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture.

Teachers saw themselves as a part of the community surrounding Komesho School even if they lived 10 kilometres away, on the periphery of Oshakati town. However, rural parents/guardians revealed different views toward teachers who live near Oshakati town. Some parents/guardians believed that teachers who live near town are removed from the challenges—such as floodwaters and long walking distances—that others in the community and, in particular, Komesho learners face.

The community is rooted in oral traditions; communication occurs primarily through face-to-face interaction rather than through written communication. The community and the school communicate through letters and notes when it is deemed necessary, but more often they discuss pertinent issues verbally in the Oshykwanyama language during parents' meetings or school visits. Verbal communication amongst the community was an integral part of the school-community dynamics; parents/guardians were welcome to visit the school at any time of the school year and specific invitations are usually issued to parents/guardians once each term.

Indigenous education in Namibia, prior to European colonial interests which began in the early 1800s, has been referred to as *community* *education*; the entire community was the educational agent and learning was integrated into daily lived experiences. In indigenous or 'traditional' education each member of the community had a valuable educational role to play and children learned through oral histories, apprenticeship, and participating in their emerging social roles.

After South Africa was given the mandate to govern Namibia, 'Bantu Education' was introduced and enforced as a means to maintain and perpetuate an apartheid society ruled by a minority of White leaders. Bantu education was described as 'community education' - the community was given more 'responsibility' to provide finances and school buildings. Moreover, Bantu education limited the curriculum to 'basic skills', sought to exclude Black Namibian's from higher education and prepared Blacks for a subserviant position in society.

In contrast, following Namibia's political independence in 1990, the MBEC has encouraged community-school linkages as a means to provide a formal education system that promotes its goals for equality, quality, efficiency, and access. Community participation in schooling currently also seeks to increase the relevance of formal education to the Namibia's dynamic culture and environment. 'Community education' in a post apartheid society encourages communities to have an active voice in their school; parents/guardians and all community members are vital stakeholders and resources for schools.

The MBEC concept of community education emerges through its policy statements and documents. MBEC documents revealed a reoccurring objective: to strengthen the partnership between the school and its community. In its document *Education for All*, the MBEC (1993) states that the community must be encouraged to play a role in school governance, administration, and management. While the community's fulfillment of such roles may be a positive step toward school-community relationships, the degree of participatory democracy that exists when educational objectives and philosophy that are formed outside of the community must be questioned.

Toward Education for All (MBEC, 1993) outlines how Namibia's education system is moving away from the former discriminatory education system that catered to a privileged White minority. Yet, Namibia's educational statistics indicate that the MBEC policy of 'education for all' is far from becoming a reality. The current 'Western' model of schooling continues to funnel and eliminate learners (MBEC 1993). The data from this case study suggest that community participation in limited educational domains will impede Namibia's objective of creating a relevant and equitable education system for all Namibians. A national education system that is formulated without genuine input from its rural communities risks alienating itself from rural realities.

The MBEC and NIED support community participation in domains such as school finances, school rules, and building constructions. Yet the research data did not find that the community surrounding Komesho School is encouraged to participate genuinely in educational decision-making processes that involve the curricula, foundational policies, political ideologies, and learning objectives. The data of this research suggest that new avenues and an altered framework for community participation could be explored in order to strengthen educational access, relevance, quality, and equality.

In this study, the researcher defines community education as an ideal learning environment where community members play crucial educational roles, where learning integrates within formal and informal settings, and where the community genuinely participates in all educational spheres. Thus, the community education model for this research assumes that the total community should be the educational agency; the school does not hold the sole responsibility of educating young people but education is a process shared by many stakeholders.

Minzey and LeTarte (1979, p. 31) establish several objectives of the 'community school': promoting interaction between school and community, surveying community resources and assisting in their delivery, and bringing about a better relationship between social and government agencies. When a community holds mutual interests and commitments to education, when education is understood as a life-long process not limited to a community's youth, and when schools are seen as a primary educational centre, it is natural to view the school as the key institution that best delivers 'community education'.

Social issues can and should be addressed within formal education systems and at the local school level; no educational system is void of socioeconomic, political and ideological values. However, external constraints cannot be undermined; a local school and its community exist within a larger political and socioeconomic system. Thus, community education is a philosophical concept which cannot single -handedly solve a vast number of community and national problems. Deeply rooted societal problems addressed at the local or grassroots level will be thwarted or encouraged by national and international dynamics.

Urban migration and migrant labour are issues that impact the life of the case study school and community. Participants highlighted that biological parents are often working in an urban centre which may located several hundred miles from their families' farm and village. Biological parents may rarely visit their children who are most often under the care of relatives. In this community, many maternal grandparents are responsible for the upbringing and education of grandchildren. However, grandparents face daunting work challenges in subsistence farming and may not have the financial resources needed for their grandchildren's school fees and uniform. Additionally, mothers who are working in urban areas conceive and bring children to their home village where relatives, in particular the mother's parents, will accept and raise the children. Participants noted that subsistence farming demands and time constraints are challenges to school-community relationships that are compounded by rural-urban migration patterns.

Educational Responsibilities

The Primary Health Care Programme, a collaboration between the Ministry of Health and the MBEC that is delivered by community nurses at local schools such as Komesho, exemplifies one of the community's educational roles. Parents/guardians and all community members also hold important educational responsibilities, including teaching children values, morals, and additional practical skills. The data revealed that the community places a degree of importance on the learning that occurs at home or within the community. However, informal learning was not perceived to be connected or integrated with learning that occurs at school.

In contrast, precolonial education in Namibia viewed education and the community to be 'part and parcel'—one did not exist independent of the other. Since formal education was introduced in Namibia in the early 19th century, this nation, like many Third World regions, has largely accepted a 'Western' schooling system, which has the potential to fragment rather than integrate communities. Carr's (1942; as cited in Poster, 1990) analogy of the school as an "island set apart from the mainland of life" to some extent parallels the findings of this study. Participants, although often valuing the learning that occurs in the context of daily activities and life experiences, distinguished and separated schooling from informal learning.

In *Alternative Education,* Quintos-Deles (1986) describes how the historical role of the community has degenerated alongside the rise of 'modernity' and industrialisation in Third World countries:

> While there is, of course, no going back to the state of life in our original communities, I believe the central theme of alternative education must be the theme of reintegration—reconnecting dimensions of our people's lives that have become disjointed. (p. 4)

Quintos-Deles (1986) argues that there are four 'thrusts' that promote reintegration: the community as the centre of learning, the unity of theory and practice, the principle of people's power, and the appreciation of indigenous culture. The findings of the Komesho case study support Quintos-Deles' conclusion that if reintegration does not move beyond rhetoric, the gulf between the orientation of 'professional educators' and the orientation of the rest of the community will increase (p. 5).

School-Community Relationships

Teachers, parents/guardians, and additional community members confirmed that Komesho School maintains an open invitation policy. It is significant that the community is aware that the gates at Komesho School are open to receive parents/guardians or guests who may have questions or desire to give input into any functions of the school. Specifically, an elder who represents one village's elders' council took the initiative to visit the school to investigate and challenge the school's policies on attendance, fees, and uniforms. During the morning that the elder visited and observed the school, teachers and the principal took several hours to respond to the elder's queries and concerns about the well-being and safety of the learners. This visit from a key representative of the community illuminates the vital communication that occurs between Komesho School and its community; the community maintains linkages with the school, particularly when pertinent issues that impact the lives of their children arise.

Parents/guardians stated that they were aware of the school's extended invitation and explained that they would be willing to go to the school if a significant issue arose. However, parents/guardians seldom visit the school outside of official school invitations. When parents/guardians are directly requested to visit the school (for example, to attend parents' meetings), the vast majority of parents/guardians come. The school's open invitation to the community is a positive step; in addition, the MBEC, school management, and teachers can take further initiatives (for example, creating policies to encourage increased levels of community involvement) to strengthen community-school relationships.

Due to the discriminatory formal education that existed prior to Namibia's independence in 1990 and due to Namibia's long struggle for independence, many Namibians were denied formal education opportunities beyond 'basic education.' Moreover, English replaced Afrikaans as the mode of instruction in Namibia after independence. Thus, under the current structures, the upper-primary curriculum (Grades 4-6), taught in English, is inaccessible to many community members. The data did not indicate that parents/guardians and additional community members who hold low levels of schooling are participating in key educational decisions.

Participants were aware of the socioeconomic mobility and status benefits that often accompany high academic credentials. The majority of participants acknowledged that many students who do complete Grade 12 are unable to find desirable employment. In essence, the participants realised that the demand for higher educational credentials increases at a rate that surpasses not only educational opportunities but also employment opportunities. However, only a minority of participants spoke of the problem that vast numbers of Namibian learners do not complete Grade 12.

A number of parents/guardians perceived that knowledge gained from life experiences outside of formal education was less 'valuable' because informal education does not provide employment outside of subsistence farming regions. In contrast, teacher educators at Ongwediva College of Education (OCE) stressed the value of informal education and the importance of culture, agriculture, and tradition.

In sum, socioeconomic constraints such as time and employment; political barriers such as MBEC policies; and educational constraints such as levels of English and levels of formal education are factors that impede the community's involvement in formal education.

Community Input Into Formal Education

Parents' meetings are a crucial forum where teachers and parents/guardians communicate face to face in the Oshykwanyama language. Parents/guardians are consulted at parents' meetings in order to approve or alter school expenditures, to elect parent/guardian representatives for the school board, to discuss school development projects, and to give input into additional school policy decisions.

Fantini (1975; as cited in Kaplan, 1978, p. 15).describes increasing degrees of participatory roles that include *consultative*, in which educators confer with the community before making a decision; *advisory,* in which community advisory committees and educators interact, with decision making resting with the professional; *shared control,* where community members and professionals have an equal voice in planning; and *community control,* in which the community holds a large part of the decision-making power. The findings indicate that professional educators (including the MBEC and Komesho teachers) make educational decisions that impact curriculum, management, and policy at Komesho School. Parents/guardians and community members have primarily a consulting and advising role in school-related decisions.

It is important to note that five parents/guardians sit on the school board as community representatives and participate in the school's decision-making processes. Board meetings are always conducted in the Oshykwanyama language and school board members are not chosen on the basis of their level of education or position of employment, but rather on their commitment to represent the community's parents/guardians for a five year term. The school board's decision-making powers include school management issues, financial decisions, and evaluation of teachers and quality of instruction. However, their input does not extend into transformative educational realms such as curricula formation and educational objectives. Data did not emerge to indicate that the school board or the community critically examines underpinning educational ideology or 'development' goals that are intrinsic in a national educational system. The community and, specifically, the school board are encouraged actively to evaluate the quality of learning (MBEC, 1993, p. 42). Although parent/guardian representatives on the school board have this evaluatory mandate, the researcher did not find data to indicate that the community monitored educational quality.

The data indicate that differences between community members' lower levels of formal education and educators' higher levels of education create a gulf between the community and the school. The data also suggest that educators, including the MBEC, NIED, and teachers, are perceived to hold legitimate and respected knowledge and are trusted to deliver a formal education curriculum. However, the community was willing to question school policies or rules that jeopardised the well-being of their children. For example, community members disagreed with and questioned a locked-school-gate policy—a rule that was established without parental consultation. Additionally, parents/guardians did not send young children to school if floodwaters were dangerously high.

Community educators such as Kerensky (1981) argue that the degree to which the community's voice is heard throughout the decision-making processes impacts the degree to which the community will accept change. The analysis of this case-study data correlates to Kerensky's findings in the sense that parents/guardians more readily agree with policies where they have been consulted.

School-community relationships are impeded by barriers such as a curriculum that is 'foreign' to many parents/guardians, diverse levels of formal education, and the absence of policies to encourage genuine community participation in formal education. However, Komesho School and its community are linked through a number of cohesive forces such as their indigenous language, culture, agriculture, history, and educational aspirations. The communication that occurs between Komesho School and its surrounding community indicates that school-community relationships and linkages are valued by teachers, parents/guardians, and additional community members.

ENDNOTES

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[i] The MBEC supports the view that teachers will be more valuable to their school if they are not disconnected from the lives of their community:

> Teachers are key to the development of our country and are important resources to their communities. It is therefore essential that teachers maintain close contact with their communities and assist learners in integrating school and life outside the school. (p. 81)

[ii] The researcher accompanied the PHC team to Komesho School and two additional schools. During one school visit the researcher accompanied a member of the PHC team to visit a home where a single mother and her children faced several health-related difficulties.

[iii] At International Combined Primary School (ICP), because parents contributed a higher school fee, the school can afford to pay for additional resources that the majority of rural schools in the district are lacking. For example, ICP can pay for substitute teachers, occasional field trips, and additional books. Parents also contributed to a large hall, staff room, and permanent classrooms.

[iv] An exception to this view did arise from a teacher educator, speaking as a parent, who described a 'problem' of parental financial contributions to schools:

> The problem is the information that we lack. We are not informed about how much contribution is made by the government. And that we as parents would like to know so that we can judge whether the contribution is less from the parents and whether the contribution is more from the government. The issue of the budget should be an open issue. (C3, March 20)

[v] Observing additional schools, the researcher discovered that 'guest' speakers/instructors rarely came to schools. There were only isolated cases; for example, in a previous year at ICP a group of elderly people came to a history class and taught in the vernacular language.

The following dialogue with a teacher at ICP reveals a way of thinking that was shared by several respondents:

> Researcher: Do you have parents who can come into the class and help with the teaching?

> Respondent: We are having skilled parents, but we never use that. Only maybe those who can build or draw something; they can do something.
>
> Researcher: Do you think it is possible to have parents come in to volunteer in classes?
>
> Respondent: I don't think so, I don't really think so. Do you mean as teachers? I cannot really answer because I've never seen such a thing. I think it is possible if it could be organized, but the parents are supposed to be at their respective work. (March 10)

[vi] Later in the term I spoke with an Oshakati police officer, who described an upcoming school program. Police officers will be visiting schools in a proactive attempt to decrease crime and promote positive relations within their district.

[vii] In its document *Education For All*, the MBEC (1993) states:

> Schools can meet the needs of communities only if there is a genuine and working partnership between the government and the community. Schools are located in communities to serve them. Communities must therefore be fully informed in the affairs of their schools. (p. 19)

The Ministry also points out a crucial goal within the BETD: to train teachers who will communicate with the school's community in order to encourage the community's active participation.

[viii] In contrast, face-to-face communication between teachers and parents at ICP occurred daily; the majority of parents are physically present on the school grounds to bring and collect children.

[ix] A teacher educator believed that parents should be invited to schools regardless of their children's academic performance. From her experience with schools in the Ondangua district, it appears that "teachers only [invite] parents whose children seem to have problems. . . . If a child is making progress, [teachers] never invite you to come.

[x] The principal stated the lowest attendance estimate, believing that only half of the parents come when invited. In different situations the principal did not hold high expectations for parental involvement. It was difficult for the researcher to identify a consensus on the parents' responses to invitations.

[xi] This college educator added:

> I have an experience of another school where one of my nieces who is under my care is attending. She was admitted two years ago, but so far I have not ever received a letter inviting me to attend a meeting. I have been able to talk to some of the teachers, . . . but I don't necessarily feel comfortable. There should be open communication, and the school should be more accepting—this has to come from the school management and from the teachers. (C2, April 21)

[xii] The principal at International Combined Primary explained their promotion policy:

> There is a policy from the Ministry, but sometimes it depends on the school itself. For example, we were told last year that Grade 1 and Grade 2 should not fail. But we just felt that if the child does not know how to read in Grade 2, why promote him to Grade 3? . . . What we normally do is, if the child cannot read, we call in the parents before the promotion takes place. Now the parents, they are the ones who are having the last say. (April 22)

[xiii] An educator at ICP noted: "Most of the parents who are more involved are those who have a high level of schooling. And those who are having lower education, they hardly visit the school."

The ICP principal speculated that parents might not visit the school if their English is poor or if they do not hold a high level of schooling. Because all ICP classes are taught in English, the principal recognised that some non-English parents might feel threatened by the teachers' English competency.

[xiv] ICP parents were formerly elected to the school board regardless of their level of education, ability to speak English, or social status. However, the ICP principal explained their current practice:

> If the person is not highly educated, it is always difficult for him to understand the level where the school is at now. For example, in terms of financial situations, some parents feel the school fee is too high. . . . Also, at our school we had a problem of communication. All our meetings are held in English.

ICP has decided that parents with financial constraints, limited English skills, and lower levels of schooling are not eligible to participate on the school board. Educators must question how broadly based community participation can be achieved within a discriminatory school policy.

[xv] This teacher educator supported parents' input into the curriculum and referred to an article that was developed by 'uneducated' parents: "[The article] has good examples of aims, of how aims of education should be and how the content of education should be" (C3, March 20). This educator also believed that the MBEC policies should be translated so that people in the community have the opportunity to make contributions to Basic Education Policies.

[xvi] The researcher visited a rural primary school where one teacher explained his position: Parents are 'not educated' and therefore should not be involved in the school curriculum. This teacher explained that traditions such as children kneeling before elders and children looking down when spoken to are changing. He asserted that although parents remain with former 'traditions,' children are learning new attitudes at school. However, educators must question the consequences of discarding all traditions and replacing this void with 'new attitudes' that may be based on a modernization paradigm, an ideology that fails to consider the richness of unique histories and heritage.

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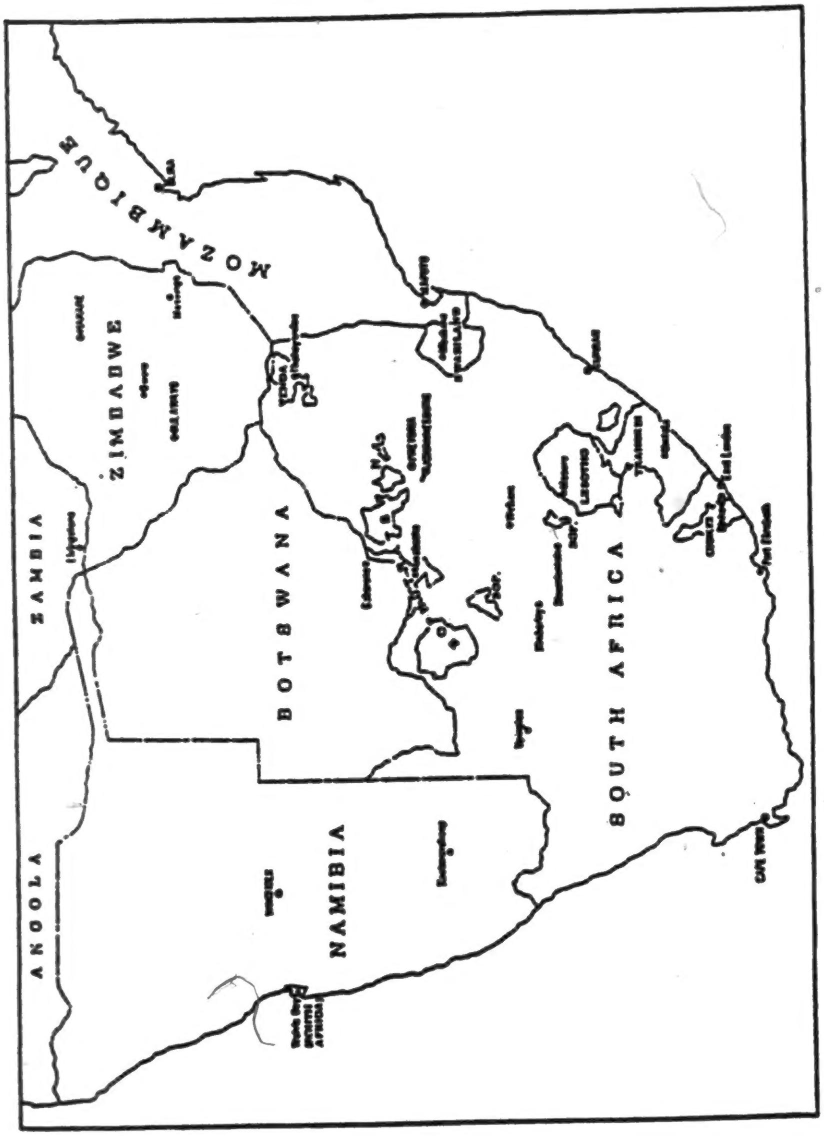
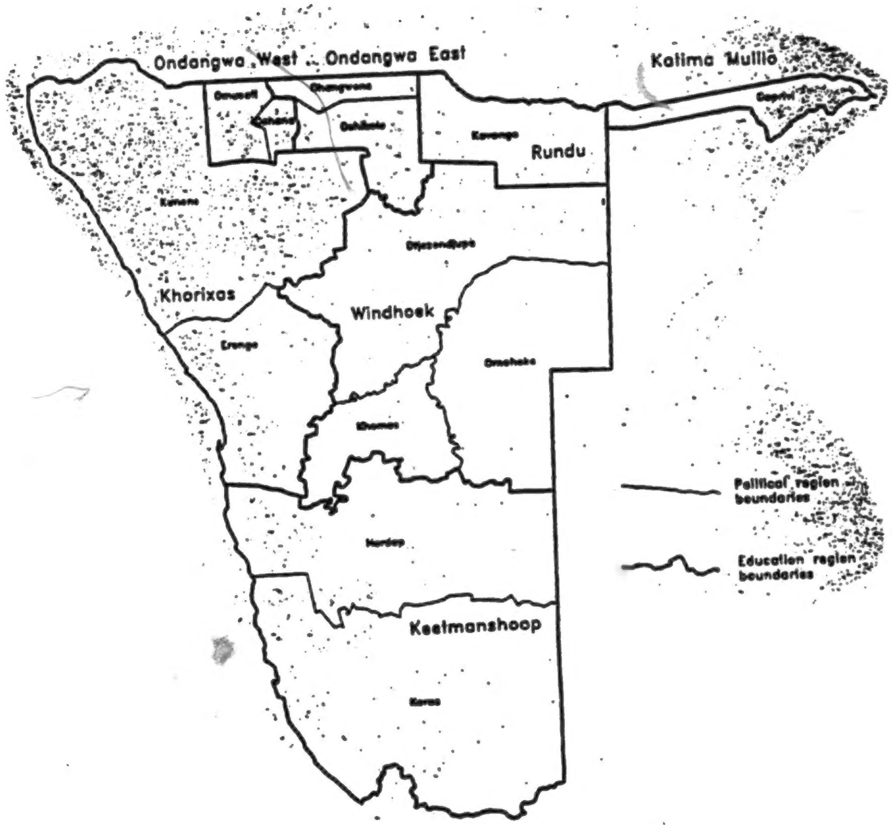
Appendix A: Map 1

Southern Africa


MOZAMBIQUE
ZIMBABWE
ZAMBIA
BOTSWANA
ANGOLA
NAMIBIA
SOUTH AFRICA
LESOTHO

Appendix A: Map 2

Namibia's Political and Education Regions

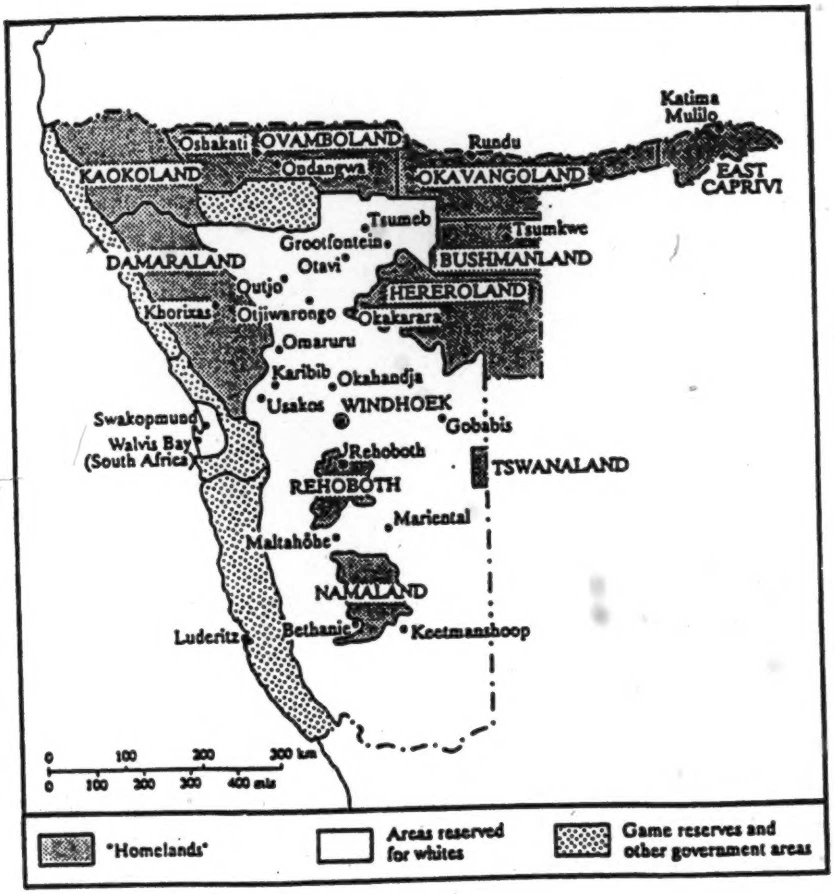

Ondangwa West
Ondangwa East
Katima Mulilo
Omusati
Ohangwena
Oshana
Oshikoto
Kavango
Rundu
Caprivi
Kunene
Otjozondjupa
Khorixas
Windhoek
Erongo
Omaheke
Khomas
Hardap
Keetmanshoop
Karas
Political region boundaries
Education region boundaries

Source: Ministry of Education and Culture. (1994). *School Statistics.* Republic of Namibia.

Appendix A: Map 3

South West Africa: Ethnic 'Homelands' according to the 1963 Odendaal Plan

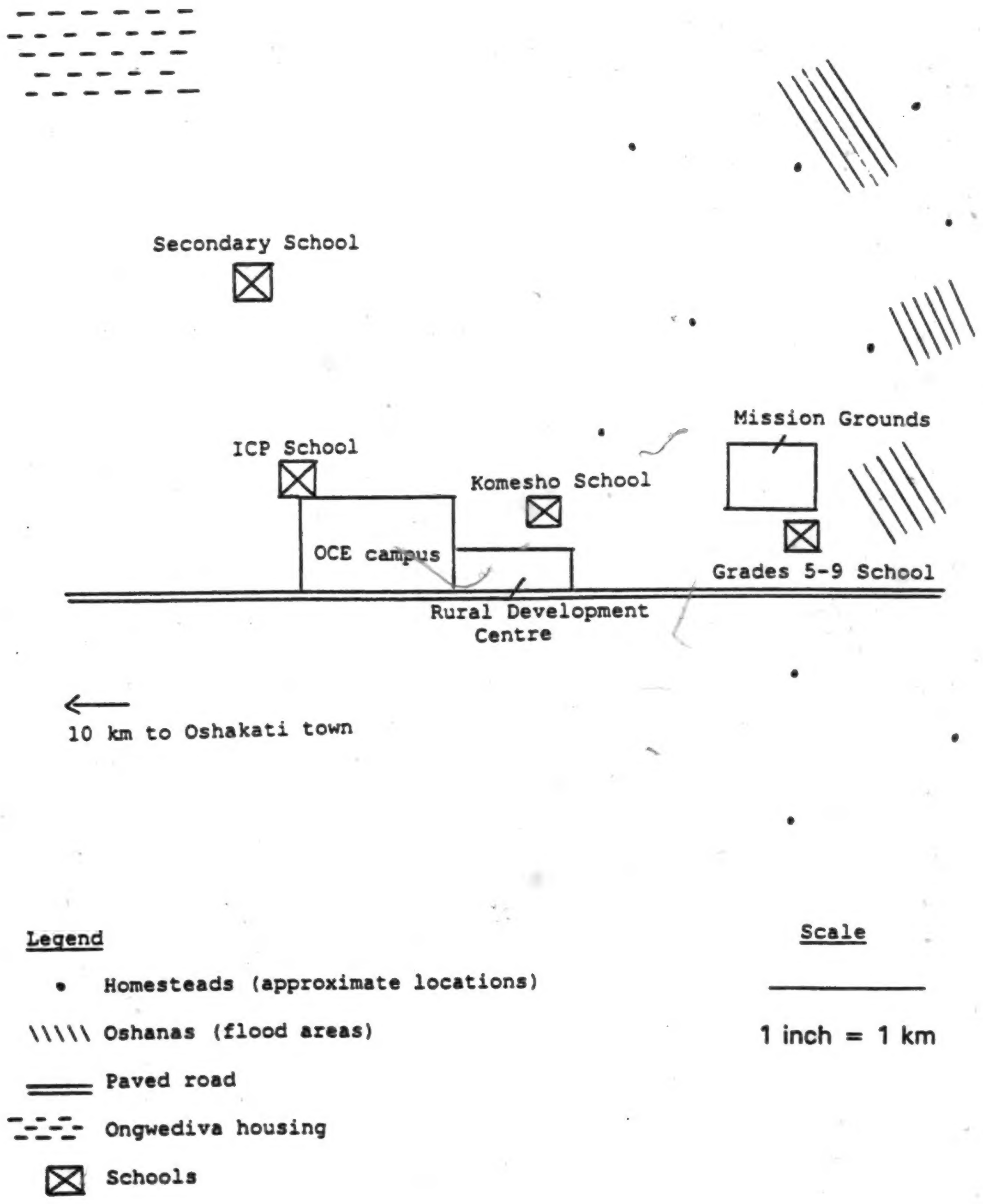
Ethnic 'Homelands' according to the Odendaal Plan


Katima Mulilo
Oshakati
OVAMBOLAND
Ondangwa
Rundu
OKAVANGOLAND
EAST CAPRIVI
KAOKOLAND
Tsumeb
Tsumkwe
Grootfontein
BUSHMANLAND
DAMARALAND
Otavi
Outjo
HEREROLAND
Khorixas
Otjiwarongo
Okakarara
Omaruru
Karibib
Okahandja
Usakos
WINDHOEK
Gobabis
Swakopmund
Walvis Bay (South Africa)
Rehoboth
REHOBOTH
TSWANALAND
Mariental
Maltahöhe
NAMALAND
Luderitz
Bethanie
Keetmanshoop
0
100
200
300 km
0
100
200
300
400 mls
'Homelands'
Areas reserved for whites
Game reserves and other government areas

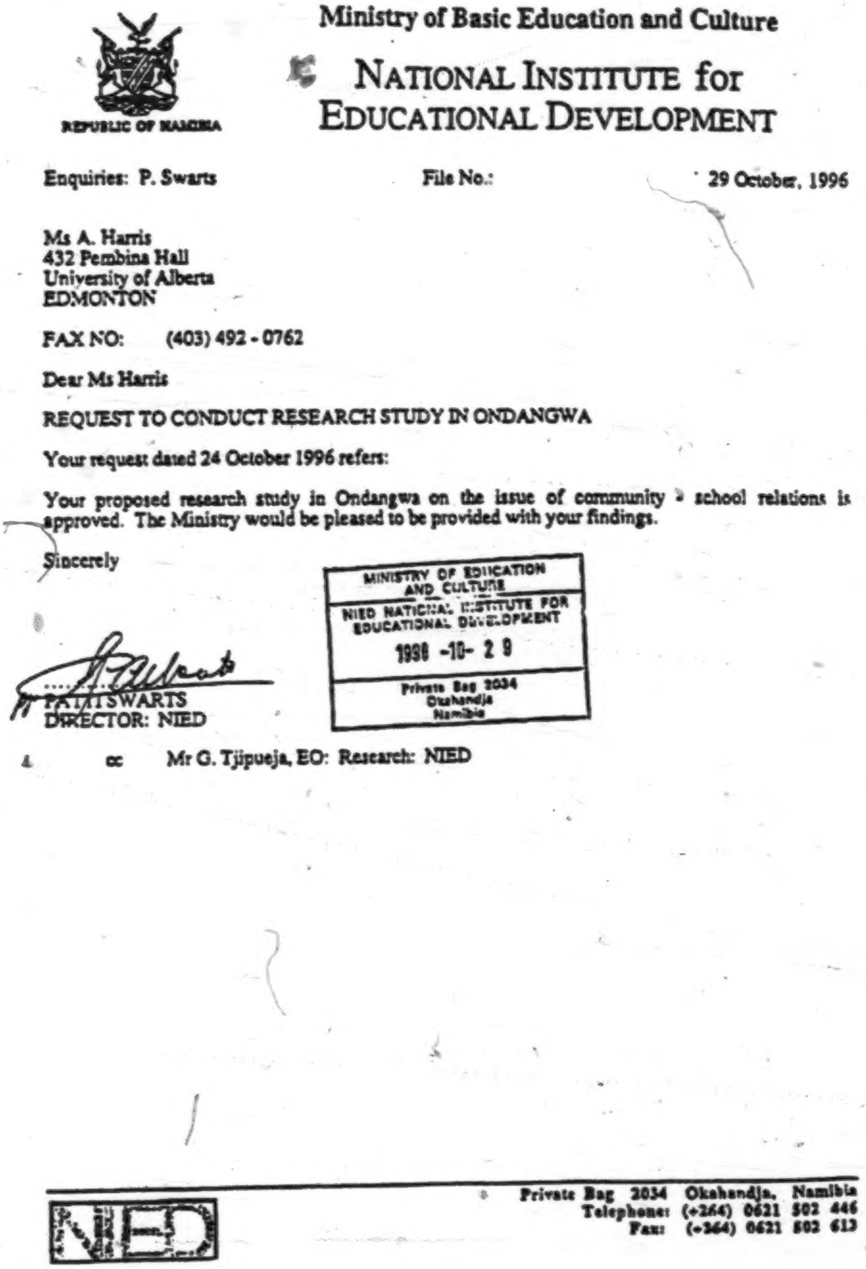
Source: Cohen, C. (1994) *Administering education in Namibia: The colonial period to the present.* Windhoek: Namibia Scientific Society.

Appendix A: Map 4

Komesho School and Surrounding Community


Secondary School
ICP School
Komesho School
Mission Grounds
OCE campus
Grades 5-9 School
Rural Development Centre
← 10 km to Oshakati town
Legend
● Homesteads (approximate locations)
\\\\\ Oshanas (flood areas)
═ Paved road
-.-.- Ongwediva housing
☒ Schools
Scale
1 inch = 1 km

Appendix B



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Ministry of Basic Education and Culture

NATIONAL INSTITUTE for
EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Enquiries: P. Swarts File No.: 29 October, 1996

Ms A. Harris
432 Pembina Hall
University of Alberta
EDMONTON

FAX NO: (403) 492 - 0762

Dear Ms Harris

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY IN ONDANGWA

Your request dated 24 October 1996 refers:

Your proposed research study in Ondangwa on the issue of community - school relations is approved. The Ministry would be pleased to be provided with your findings.

Sincerely

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
AND CULTURE
NIED NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
1996 -10- 29
Private Bag 2034
Okahandja
Namibia

PATTI SWARTS
DIRECTOR: NIED

cc Mr G. Tjipueja, EO: Research: NIED

NIED

Private Bag 2034 Okahandja, Namibia
Telephone: (+264) 0621 502 446
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Appendix C

Information and Request for Research on Community - School Relations

Objectives of Research:

This research project aims to describe the relationships that exist between the local school and its surrounding community. "Community" includes all people who live in the region surrounding the school. For example, the childrens' parents and relatives, people involved in farming, and people who are working in other businesses or professions.

The intent of the proposed study is to strengthen community-school links.

How teachers and community members can participate:

Information will be gathered from conversations, interviews and observations. Each teacher in any given school has the option of participating or not participating in the study. If teachers or community members choose to participate in the study, the researcher would like to talk, in groups or individually with such people (participants). The researcher will ask for permission to tape record or take notes during such interviews. The participants will be asked to sign a consent form.

The study is not an evaluation or inspection, but rather an effort to work with other educators in order to increase the quality of education by involving the community in education.

Reporting the Findings of the Study:

This proposed study will be written in a report that will partially fulfill the requirements for a Masters of International Education, granted by the University of Alberta, Canada. The Namibian Ministry of Basic Education and Culture has also requested a copy of the findings.

The researcher believes that the proposed study will contribute to Namibia's efforts to increase community links with schools in order to improve the quality of primary education. Please feel free to ask Alison any questions that you might have about the study.

Sincerely, Alison Harris (Researcher)

Appendix D

Observation/Interview Consent Form

I agree to participate in the interview/observation upon the following conditions, and shall freely withdraw from the interview/observation should I feel that the conditions are not being met:

1. The researcher has explained to me in comprehensive terms the nature and purpose of the study.

2. The study is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw without risking any penalty or loss.

3. That I will remain anonymous in the study and that the raw data from observations and interviews, or any other interactions during the study will remain confidential. Data will not be used to disadvantage me, and that no other persons other than me and the researcher will have access to the raw data.

____

Participant / Informant

____

Date

____

Place